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A treatise on comforting  
afflicted consciences





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A TREATISE

ON COMFORTING

AFFLICTED CONSCIENCES:

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1620,

BY

ROBERT BOLTON, B. D.

MINISTER OF BROUGHTON IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE;

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION AND MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

THE REV. J. F. DENHAM.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE following definition of Conscience seems to be sanctioned by an eminent writer\* :—A native tendency in the mind of man to contemplate the actions of himself and others, united to a susceptibility of deriving pleasure or dissatisfaction from the perception of them as moral or immoral.

This definition, although so framed as to include every thing which seems to be known with certainty on the subject, is nevertheless considered by many as liable to controversy. Some would object to conscience being called a native tendency of the mind, and maintain that it should be considered as an *acquired* capability. Others allow, that man really possesses such an original capability, but contend that it approves or condemns actions, not according as they are right or wrong in themselves, but according as mankind are taught by education so to consider them. It is evident that each of these several opinions cannot be correct, and no less so, that it is highly desirable to ascertain which of them is so; not only upon the general principle that correct ideas on all topics are to be preferred,

\* Dr. Thomas Brown.

but also because of the difference in the practical consequences which attend each of these theories.

If the theory stated in the definition be admitted, our views of the moral nature of man will be greatly elevated. We must thenceforward regard him as showing from his construction, that he was intended by his Creator for the highest species of moral agency; that he was designed to act not merely according to the supposed effect of his conduct upon society, but agreeably to the intrinsic and immutable nature of truth. His responsibility would at the same time seem to be greatly enhanced by the possession of a susceptibility, which enables him to discern whether an action be right or wrong with as much precision as the palate of his mouth enables him to distinguish sweetness from bitterness. It would also follow, that moral instruction should be greatly conducted with a view to it; and that instead of the modern mode of estimating the qualities of an action by forming an estimate of its expediency, we should with ancient moralists make our appeal to the preference or dislike of our inward emotions.

They who adopt the opinion that conscience is an acquired capability, must admit the conclusion, that the moral part of our constitution is comparatively destitute of guidance.

The reception of the third theory, that the susceptibility is original, but depends for its application on accidental circumstances, will conduct to consequences nearly similar, since the difference is but little between not possessing an instinct and possessing an instinct not determined to its object.

It may be allowed to examine and reply to the *ob-*

*jections* brought to show that the principle called conscience is an acquired property of the mind, to offer some considerations which would render the opposite opinion the most *probable*, and then to urge the *direct* arguments by which it seems to be supported. This endeavour may the more readily be admitted, since the ensuing treatise contains no information upon the nature of conscience, but simply describes its emotions when distressed, and the method of assuaging them by applying the truths of the gospel.

1. The *objections* urged to show that conscience is not an original faculty of the human mind communicated to it by the Creator, but acquired by our circumstances, are of the following nature:—

That if it were so, its effects would be *uniform*; that we should consequently observe all mankind entertaining the same feelings towards the same actions, and therefore pursuing the same conduct. Instead however of this similarity, we may learn from histories and travels that there is not a single crime, which has not been publicly countenanced in some age or country. Theft, which is considered as dishonourable and worthy of punishment by most nations, was not only tolerated but even encouraged at Sparta. In this country it is deemed meritorious to maintain aged and indigent parents, and no less so in North America to kill them out of the way. Suicide itself, which is usually thought in Christian countries to be so hopeless and atrocious a crime, has had its advocates among the ancient philosophers. Humane treatment of captives is regarded as honourable and virtuous in this quarter of the globe, and not less so by a wild Ame-

rican to destroy them by the slowest and most inhuman tortures.

That even among ourselves we may hear the same act applauded or censured, tolerated or disallowed, according to the circle of the society in which we may move.

That this variety and even opposition observable in the sentiments of mankind, seem little to favour the supposition that we possess a native perception of the difference of actions\*.

The validity of these instances is acknowledged, and also that they might be indefinitely multiplied. Upon a more minute investigation, however, they will be found less applicable to the purpose for which they are adduced than might at first be expected. It is replied, that these contrarieties are to be ascribed not to the *absence* of a moral instinct in the mind of man, but to some peculiar advantage supposed to attend them, which attracts the mind aside from its natural action. Thus when a Spartan considered theft in the abstract, as the possession of another's property against his will, and as attended with *no other* consequence than the production of so much evil, it might suggest exactly the same emotions in his mind as it would do in the mind of a respectable Englishman. Let the Spartans, however, be induced to believe, that, owing to the character and power of their oppressors, to secrete and carry off property with agility would be a useful qualification, and we can understand how theft itself for the sake of *this* supposed advantage might

\* Paley's Moral Philosophy, chapter v.

seem allowable, and even become a branch of education among the Lacedemonians. The same distinction will reconcile the conduct of the American savages consistently with the existence of a moral sense. The general accounts given of this custom represent it as a *religious ceremony*. The power of superstition is well known to be in proportion to the ignorance of the human mind. In the mind of these savages adherence to ancient customs or the imitation of their deities might possibly operate so strongly as to overcome the suggestion of natural conscience. Suicide also may *fallaciously seem* to be palliated or even rendered *allowable* by the peculiarity of circumstances. The impulse of revenge may overcome the suggestions of conscience so far as to permit the horrible treatment of their enemies by the New Zealanders, who nevertheless would feel as we should in reference to killing and devouring a friend or fellow-countryman. In these, and perhaps all similar instances, it is easy to discover some advantage which is supposed to attend the action, and for the sake of which the mind becomes (improperly) reconciled to it, whereas it would have instantly rejected it if contemplated without it. If instances could be adduced in which mankind have acted in opposition to the obvious dictates of morality uninfluenced by some such consideration, then the existence of conscience as an original sense would be opposed by an unanswerable objection. But where was it ever known that nations or individuals allowed or abetted theft as an act unconnected with the supposed advantage of themselves or others? Where is the tribe who destroy their aged parents as an action indifferent in its consequence upon their own happiness? Where is the

writer that ever advocated suicide as allowable, when considered in itself?

These, then, and similar cases fail, when urged as objections against the doctrine, that conscience is an original principle, because they do not result from the *simple* action of our emotions, but from them when perturbed and biassed by adequate causes.

The consideration of these perturbing causes has given rise however to *another objection*, urged by no less an authority than Mr. Locke. The substance of it is, that it is highly unreasonable to suppose that any law of nature, for such this representation of conscience would render it, should thus become liable to interruption.

It is replied, that this objection does not include sufficient regard to the nature of man as a moral agent. The laws which relate to the moral part of man's nature are different from those by which the material world is governed. The latter are probably no less efficient now than at the creation, but the character of man as a free agent renders it likely that his powers both of body and of mind should be liable to be affected by his own voluntary conduct. It is further urged, that the objection overlooks the fact, that other *unquestionable* instincts of our nature may be similarly affected. Self-preservation will surely be ranked among them; and yet it is evident that it is liable to become altogether counteracted. "Whatever cheapens life abates the fear of death\*." Unhappy persons under the consciousness of sin, and ignorant of the character of God as a Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, evi-

\* Dr. Young.

dently balance between the agonies of remorse, the dread of punishment, the pains of death, and the possibility of future anguish; and as the least of evils, desperately lift their hands against themselves, and violate the tabernacle of their own life. If one susceptibility so powerful as that of self-love may thus become obviated, why may not another?

The just idea of conscience admits this possibility. It has regard to the acknowledged law of the human mind, that the suggestions of one set of feelings may be affected and even overcome by the greater force of those of another. Thus the murderer, who has long cherished his revenge, and ultimately sees his victim within his grasp, may probably destroy him without repugnance. He may draw the poignard from his quivering breast with no other feelings than the satisfaction arising from the achievement of a long-intended project. It is afterwards, when this revenge has been gratified, and the natural action of his feelings is restored, that he awakens to the witherings of remorse. He was at the time of the deed insusceptible of them, for the same reason that he was also incapable of telling at that moment the cube of nine or the square of sixteen. The return of the degree of quiescence necessary for the performance of an arithmetical process, would witness the returning action of the moral sense.

It has been beautifully said, that “the heart of man may be allegorically represented by an island level with the water which bathes it. On the pure white marble of the island are engraved the precepts of the law of nature. Near them is one who bends his eyes upon the inscription, and reads it aloud. This is the genius

of the island, the lover of virtue. The water is in perpetual agitation. The slightest zephyr wafts it into billows. It then covers the inscription: we no longer see the characters: we no longer hear conscience read them. But the calm soon rises from the bosom of the ocean. The island reappears as before, and conscience resumes its employment\*." It seems therefore no valid objection against the existence of the moral instinct to urge that it is liable to counteraction.

A further *objection* is derived from the fact, that it scarcely operates at all in infancy, and from its gradually becoming stronger with advancing age, a circumstance which would seem to favour the idea of its being an acquired rather than an original principle.

It may however be replied, that this is nothing more than is true respecting other of our susceptibilities, which have ever been deemed to be instinctive. The instinct of self-preservation, for instance, which causes the eye to close upon the near approach to it of a dangerous object, and the hands to be raised when we are in danger of falling, scarcely operates at all in infancy. It begins to operate when it is needed, when the augmented strength of the child renders it less dependent upon the parents, and when therefore it is more exposed to personal danger. So the moral instinct may be imagined to remain dormant, without inducing any doubt as to its existence, till the maturity of our powers generally may have prepared us to enter upon the period of our responsibility.

It has been further *objected*, that if there had been

\* Rousseau.

such an original power in the mind, there must also have been implanted within us an idea of the object to which it was to be directed. The possession of the instinct supposes the possession of ideas of the actions to be approved or disapproved by it: but we possess no such ideas, and therefore have no such instinct\*.

The same objection, however, would lie against the existence of every power of the human mind, as *original*. It is acknowledged upon all hands that we possess a capacity of intuitively perceiving the relation of numbers, as soon as we understand the terms in which the proposition is stated. There is no nation in which it could not be true, and perceived to be so by the inhabitants, that four are to twenty as twenty to a hundred. Yet though all mankind perceive this truth intuitively, no one contends as necessary to intuition that we should also possess an idea of all the possible propositions in numbers to which it is to be directed. In this respect the human eye and the natural conscience are similar. The human eye is adapted to the perception of objects. It is so equally whether these objects may or may not have been presented to it: it would perceive and distinguish them if they were. So the susceptibility of conscience to derive pleasure or pain from good or evil actions may exist independently of being exercised. It is however ready to operate, true to its office, whenever they may be presented by experience or observation.

It has also been *objected* against the doctrine that conscience is a native and original faculty, that our perceptions of right and wrong, upon this supposition,

\* Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, book i, ch. iv, § 19.

are mere impressions : that our minds are adapted to be affected by them in the same involuntary manner as our bodily senses are by the qualities of the different objects presented to them : that in consequence, we are no more culpable or praiseworthy for our good or evil conduct, than we are for our ideas of sweet and bitter, pleasure and pain : that, in a word, the existence of natural conscience militates against the perfect responsibility of man.

To this it is replied, that the suggestions of conscience are neither so powerful as to constrain the voluntary powers of man, nor so weak or transient as to allow of any excuse derived from want of sufficient direction.

2. There are several considerations derived from the nature of circumstances, which would seem to render it *probable* that such an original faculty as conscience would have been imparted to mankind.

It is conceded, that owing to the limitation of our powers we should be exceedingly cautious how far we speculate concerning what might or might not be expected in the intricate, multiform, immense government of God. That which might seem likely at one stage of our attainments, may seem to be much less so at another. Still it is submitted, that the circumstances of man as a moral agent admit of one presumption, which seems as much as any other to be well founded : it is, that man would be endowed by the Creator with the faculty of natural conscience. The mind of man is the source of all his actions, and consequently of all their immediate and remote effects upon himself and others, not only throughout the limits of time, but throughout eternity itself. It would hence seem likely in the highest degree, that it should be furnished with

some presiding principle. This expectation is confirmed by observing the universal provision made, in the laws which regulate material worlds, for the attainment of the purposes they were intended to answer. This is no less true respecting the intellectual powers of man ; for though the operations of the laws which regulate mind are exceedingly complex in their operation, and traced with much difficulty, yet there is reason to believe that the minutest modifications of our perceptions are the consequences of the operation of fixed laws, equally as the form of a crystal. It would seem therefore most unlikely, that the precision of purpose provided for in every other portion of the Creator's works, should be wanting in reference to the conduct of the highest race of beings inhabiting the earth.

If we reflect, that God intended the happiness of his creatures when he formed them, and that he has indissolubly connected their happiness with their conduct, we shall gain an additional probability that some principle would have been communicated to his mind, calculated to direct his conduct. The extreme desirableness of such a constitution would seem to render it very likely that it would obtain in the government of a being of perfect wisdom and perfect benevolence.

An additional *probability* that man would be endued with natural conscience is derived from the fact, that in its absence he would be thrown for his guidance upon the resources of his mere reasoning powers. But the obvious disadvantages of such a state of things render it unlikely that it should exist. The life of man is exceedingly brief. Some questions in morals are so intricate, that even supposing man to be earnestly

addicted to the investigation, his whole life would be nearly consumed in adjusting his principles. As soon almost as he began to act, he would be summoned out of the world. These disadvantages would be unavoidable, supposing that all mankind were devoted to the study of morals, and anxiously bent upon discovering their duty. But in the state of things which actually exists, wherein mankind are compelled from the very nature of their circumstances to devote so much attention to the cares of subsistence, and so few even of those who are exempt from them seem inclined to habits of serious thought of any kind, it is clear, that, upon this supposition, acting right would be the privilege only of the contemplative few.

The doctrine which we are now labouring to establish is attended with all the advantages which mankind so eminently need. It supposes man to be furnished with a faculty that enables him to discriminate the nature of actions, attended with a susceptibility so vivid and acute as to render regard to its dictates essential to his happiness: that to obey it converts existence into a pleasure and a blessing, and to have violated it entails upon him the severest wretchedness he can endure. At the same time the operation of this faculty is directed to almost every duty upon which the social happiness of mankind depends. It reaches a multitude of cases which the wisest human laws cannot include in their enactments. Human laws may prevent the grosser forms of fraud and violence, by setting against them penalties so severe as to render them no longer desirable to the depraved. But there are ten thousand acts of cruelty, unkindness, and dishonesty, which they cannot check.

Much unkindness and neglect and insolence may be shown to servants, tenants, and to helpless dependents, and yet the individual remain exempt from the punishment of the laws. The base arts with which the seducer steals the assent of confiding innocence, as literally as if he abstracted property from a dwelling house, cannot be checked by human law. There are unnumbered devices by which the villain may entangle and circumvent and withhold the property of the widow and the orphan, which evade the cognizance of human laws. Against these and ten thousand other acts of oppression, the great Father of all has interposed by transfusing into our nature a few simple feelings. A horror lowers upon the heart of the unprincipled man, when he contemplates an act of cruelty or of injury, which preserves him so far guiltless, and his intended victim safe. He feels within him a preparation for his punishment before he becomes guilty: he hears a voice, heard by none but himself, but which *will* be heard by him, telling him that his own soul shall become his accuser; assuring him also, that there is a voice in every other human bosom ready to join its reproaches with his own, and to render his life one continued scene of agony from within and of execration from without. The immense utility of such a principle renders it highly probable that it would be bestowed.

3. It may now be permitted to state the *direct proofs* which establish the opinion that conscience is an original faculty.

An eminent writer\* asserts, that in all languages there are words which signify duty and interest: that although these terms coincide in their application,

\* Dugald Stewart.

since whatever is our duty is also our interest, yet that we never confound them, either in the use we make of them, or in the feelings which they severally excite within our minds. By duty we mean something that ought to be done: by interest something which it would conduce to our well-being to perform. The perception of duty is prompt and unreasoning, and excites a degree of mental uneasiness till it be complied with. Interest, on the other hand, is always discerned by us as the result of a calculation to some intent or other. It is however as vain and useless to attempt to distinguish between these terms by words, as it would be by the same method to distinguish between the odour of a violet and of a rose. The names themselves of duty and interest are sufficient to suggest the distinction. It has been attempted by some philosophers to resolve the one into the other, but our consciousness rejects the amalgamation. When we act spontaneously, and therefore naturally, we never even think of the connection between them. The mind acknowledges it upon *reflection*, but it requires a train of reasoning to make it plain. It may indeed be useful often to trace the connection, because the principle of virtue thus becomes stronger, and its exercise more delightful. But the emotions with which we contemplate actions do not result from perceiving it. It is not the suggestions of interest which render us happy in the unexpected welfare of a neighbour or a friend. It is not interest which originates the feelings which thrill our hearts when innocence and honesty have escaped an intended oppression. It is not the principle of interest which fills us with such satisfaction when we behold a village through which we may pass, busy and happy in securing the fruits of harvest. It is not

interest which ministers the gratification which we feel upon having fulfilled an engagement, or upon being enabled to gratify the reasonable expectations which we had excited. It is not self-interest which fills the heart of the traveller with such indescribable emotions upon the plain of Marathon or in the pass of Thermopylæ. If we imagine ourselves threading that avenue to Greece where Leonidas and his three hundred held at bay for five days the invader of their country and his five millions, we may form some idea of the surprise we should experience were some advocate of the selfish system to disturb our emotions by the question, whether we did not think they originated in the perception, that acts of fortitude and patriotism in general were connected, though remotely, with our own well-being?

The emotion comes first: the possible connection of the action with our welfare comes afterwards. It strikes the heart as an object strikes the eye: we approve it because it is lovely, and we are so constructed as to approve it. In a similar manner the loathing and abhorrence with which we contemplate cruelty or fraud is instantaneous, and is excited by a view of the object as it is in itself, and not by a perception of what it may become to us. This quality of our moral emotions, their independence upon our own interest, seems to intimate that they originate in the action of an original and different faculty of the soul.

*Another* argument to the same effect is, that our moral emotions are the same, whether the action, good or evil, be known only to ourselves, or disclosed to others: they are even independent of the consideration that they are known to the Deity himself.

“The first and greatest punishment of guilt,” says

Seneca \*, “is to have been guilty. Nor can any crime, though fortune should adorn it with her most lavish bounty, as if protecting and consecrating it, pass by unpunished; because the punishment of the base and atrocious deed lies in the baseness or atrocity of the deed itself.”

“Think not,” says Cicero †, “that any one needs the burning torches of the furies to agitate and torment him: their own hands, their own crimes, their own remembrance of the past, and their terrors for the future, these are the domestic furies which are ever present to the mind of the impious.” It is superfluous to state, yet useful to remember, that these are quotations from the works of persons who lived before the Christian era, and who, from their being uninfluenced by the truths of revelation, may be justly regarded as describing the natural emotions of the human mind. The numerous passages in which they delineate the pangs of a wounded conscience, and the unmixed satisfactions attending virtue, are among the most celebrated specimens of their eloquence. So much indeed do the ancients refer the character of our actions to our internal emotions, that their usual definitions of virtue and of vice make them to consist in deviation from *nature* or conformity to it. They also represent the emotions derived from a good or evil action as arising simply from the nature of the action in itself, and independently of any other cause. Our own observation demonstrates the accuracy of their statements. Instances have been very numerous, in which crimes would probably for ever have remained unknown to mankind, but the perpetrators of them, unable to bear the *solitary* reproaches

\* Epistle 97.

† Orat. pro Sex. Roscio Amerino, sec. 24.

of their own hearts, have even many years afterwards sought the melancholy relief to be derived from confession and submission to justice.

“ Fortune,” says Seneca \*, “ may free men from vengeance, but it cannot free them from fear : it cannot free them from the knowledge of that general scorn and disgust which nature has so deeply fixed in all mankind against the crimes which they have perpetrated. Amid the security of a thousand concealments, they cannot think themselves secure from that hatred which seems ever ready to burst upon them ; for conscience is still with them, like a treacherous informer, pointing them out to themselves.”

To these may be added the testimony of a modern writer †, who was scarcely less under the influence of Christianity.

“ The wicked man fears and flies himself. He endeavours to be gay by wandering out of himself. He turns around his unquiet eyes in search of some object of amusement, that may make him forget what he really is. Even then his pleasure is only a bitter raillery ; without some sneer or contemptuous sarcasm he would for ever be sad. On the contrary, the serenity of a good man is internal. His smile is not a smile of malignity but of joy. He bears the source of it within himself. He is as gay when in the midst of the gay as when alone. He does not derive his contentment from those who approach him, he communicates it to them.”

But these emotions, so prompt, so vivid, so independent, seem to render it probable that they arise, not from any acquired, but from an original suscepti-

\* Epistle 97.

† Rousseau.

bility of the mind; not from its habits, but from its construction.

*Another* argument on the same side is derived from the circumstance, that the same actions have been regarded as virtuous or vicious in all ages. The details of history are but little more than an account of mutations. Perpetual mutations have taken place in governments and literature. Similar alterations are observable in the history of the various systems of religion that have prevailed at different periods: the objects of worship, and the modes by which they have been adored, have all in their turn disappeared, and given place to new deities and new rites. Amid this perpetual alteration by which almost every thing has been attended, it is remarkable that the general principles of morality have been permanently acknowledged. The same actions which were deemed vicious or virtuous thousands of years ago, continue in the same estimation. Generosity, gratitude, fidelity, integrity, justice, and kindness, have had a universal and perpetual empire over the veneration of mankind. Their opposite vices have never ascended from their degradation. They have been recommended or condemned, not as the result of the adjudicature of their tendencies on the social happiness of man, but as exciting emotions of pleasure or disgust. This identity of the virtues and vices in all ages, can only be ascribed to the fixed laws, by which they are recognized as such, implanted in the human heart.

“Cast your eyes,” says Rousseau, “over all the nations of the world, and all the histories of the nations. Amid so many inhuman and absurd superstitions, amid that prodigious diversity of opinions and characters,

you will find everywhere the same principles and distinctions of moral good and evil. The paganism of the ancient world produced indeed abominable gods, who on earth would have been shunned or punished as monsters; and who offered, as a picture of supreme happiness, only vices to commit and passions to satiate. But vice armed with this sacred authority, descended in vain from the eternal abode: she found in the heart of man a moral sentiment to repel her. The continence of Xenocrates was admired by those who celebrated the amours of Jupiter. The chaste Lucretia adored the unchaste Venus. The intrepid warrior sacrificed to Fear. The most contemptible divinities were served by the greatest men. The holy voice of nature, however, stronger than that of the gods, made itself heard and respected and obeyed on earth, and seemed to banish as it were to the confinement of heaven both guilt and the guilty."

A final argument may be drawn from the nature of those emotions which we denominate a gratified or wounded conscience.

It has been justly said, that the happiness derived from the contemplation and especially from the consciousness of virtue, is not capable, either in respect of its nature or permanency, of being compared with any other of our pleasures. Even the contemplation of virtuous actions is peculiarly satisfactory and refreshing: the mind feels conscious that its attention is worthily bestowed; that it is gaining additional ability for the purest enjoyments. Of this nature also are the feelings with which we contemplate the scenes of great actions, or the persons of those who are eminent for excellence. Of the same nature, only raised in some

proportion to the incomparable superiority of the object, are the emotions with which we contemplate Him, whose being and character comprehend the union of all possible excellence. The consciousness that we have been enabled to perform a virtuous action, or to persevere in the imitation of excellence without an allowed deviation, administers a feeling of the same delightful nature. The feelings produced by a long perseverance in such a course, fill us with a pleasure, to which the exulting consciousness of perfect health in early youth perhaps affords the nearest, though still an imperfect similitude. It is, in that expressive language of Solomon, health to the bones. While, on the other hand, the horror of remembered guilt afflicts us like the recollection of some intolerably loathsome object. In the sacred scriptures it is described by every comparison which can express detestation, faintness, and horror. The most expressive metaphor of all, perhaps, is that of a wounded spirit. The hopeless, sickening agony produced by a wound in some vital organ, approaches in some degree, but can never adequately represent the pangs of an accusing conscience. The mind cankers with what it deems an inmedicable wound. Unlike a bodily infirmity, the anguish of the spirit does not grow more tolerable the longer it is endured ; but, like the vitals of the fabled Prometheus, the mind presents an everlasting material to the lacerations of remorse. All other painful topics which are contemplated by the mind gradually lose their impression ; but the tale told by an angry conscience is ever new. The mind becomes day by day even more sensible to the pangs of its scorpion scourge. Other causes of mental distress are alleviated by change of scene :

but this follows the wretched creature everywhere. Nature's loveliness appears scathed and tasteless to his parched and agonizing heart. The wilderness offers no solitude. Conscience pursues him through wilds never trod by the camel: its hand is upon him though he hide him in the lair of the crocodile amid the reeds of Nilus. Now this incurable anguish, this acute sense of degradation, this withering consciousness of ill desert, admitting of no alleviation even from the softening hand of time, would seem to demonstrate that it consists in a mischief far greater than the violation of an acquired principle, however strong, but would seem to be more like an offence committed against an original law of human nature.

It is the design of the following treatise to describe these emotions, and to explain the only method by which they can be allayed. It will be found upon perusal to justify the sentiment of Dr. Doddridge\* respecting it, that "it exhibits the traces of a soul most intimately acquainted with God." The excellency of the work consists in the use of language throughout which most plainly and most accurately conveys the author's meaning, in the communication of abundant knowledge and experience, and in the natural employment of the most vivid and powerful descriptions.

The ensuing volume is a faithful transcript of the *original edition*, with the exception of a few words, which have been altered or omitted in order to render it more intelligible and suitable to modern taste.

\* Lectures on Preaching.



MEMOIR  
OF  
THE REV. ROBERT BOLTON.

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It may be interesting to the reader to be furnished with a few particulars respecting a man so truly eminent for learning, talent, and godliness. This was the wish of the writer upon perusing the treatise, and he would now endeavour to gratify a similar feeling in the mind of others.

It seems that the Rev. Robert Bolton was born at Blackbourne in Lancashire, on Whitsunday, in the year 1572. His parents were far from affluent, but yet upon perceiving in him the signs of great natural abilities in early life resolved to afford him a learned education. This design was materially aided by the residence at that period of an eminent schoolmaster in the grammar school. The progress made by him appears to have been so great, that in the course of comparatively a short time he rose to be the first boy. The memoir of him written by a contemporary states that he had the prerequisites for a scholar demanded by Isocrates. He had excellent natural abilities; a sound constitution of body; a quick apprehension;

great inquisitiveness, which led him to seek clear apprehensions of every thing that was taught him; a great attachment to the pursuits of literature; the capability of enduring great exertion with patience; and was an attentive and silent auditor to the conversations of others, observing, and even noting down whatever new ideas he collected from the observations of his elders.

He continued at school till he was nearly twenty years of age, and then removed to Lincoln College, Oxford. The same success attended his studies at the University. He acquired the notice of his superiors, and was rapidly rising in general respect in the university, when his father, who was of course his dependence, died, and his property seems for some unassigned reason to have entirely devolved to the elder brother of our author.

It has been truly remarked, that difficulties which overwhelm inferior minds serve but to exercise the courage and to elicit the resources of those of an opposite character. There are few situations, perhaps, in which these qualities would be more needed than in the case of a young man at the university, whose finances are either confined or doubtful. To be able under these circumstances to sustain his mind from depression, and especially to devote himself steadily to the studies of the place, shows him to be possessed of that consciousness of integrity, and of those mental resources, which will inevitably lead to future eminence.

The conduct of this author exhibits also his singular conscientiousness in avoiding debt at a period of life when the mind does not *always* so *fully* recognize the

nature and importance of that obligation. The subject of this account evinced his accurate sense of it by avoiding expenses, which others would have thought allowable. He borrowed from his tutor and others, says my authority, the best books on natural and moral philosophy, and read them over with the utmost diligence, wrote abridgments of them, and returned them.

His industry appears at this time to have been very praiseworthy. In order that he might attain an exact knowledge of Homer, a book at that time of considerable importance at Oxford, he wrote out the whole of the Iliad. The result of such perseverance and assiduity was to enable him to converse or discourse in the Greek language in the public schools with as much facility as he possessed in his native tongue. Thus his confined resources, which denied him access to *many* books, conduced to his more perfect acquaintance with a few, and by compelling him to transcribe them, his mind became stored with a most comprehensive and accurate knowledge of their contents.

In the course of a short time, however, he removed from Lincoln College to Brazen-nose, with a view to a fellowship; because, by the statutes of that society, Lancashire or Cheshire are entitled to election in preference to others. He, however, resided there for some time without the attainment of his object, and amid the same straitened circumstances. His merit as a scholar and as a man of integrity became ultimately known, and through the timely and generous aid of a resident fellow, he was probably appointed one of the college lecturers. By the stipends arising from this source he was upheld till he was about thirty

years old, when he obtained a fellowship. He at the same time proceeded to the degree of master of arts, and by the exercises he performed on the occasion obtained so much celebrity as to be appointed reader of lectures in logic and moral and natural philosophy in his own college. He is said to have discharged the duties of his office with such skill and diligence as to have obtained the admiration of all who approved the conscientious fulfilment of engagements, as well as the dislike of certain contemporary lecturers, who were compelled, say my authorities, to "a more frequent and painful reading of their lectures, which were seldom and slightly performed before." As another proof of the estimation in which he was held, he was chosen to be one of the disputants before King James, in natural philosophy, when that learned monarch first visited the University of Oxford.

To his other attainments it is said that he added eminence in metaphysics, mathematics, and the divinity of the schoolmen.

Yet during this career of literary eminence, he remained unaffected by the truths of revealed religion. He exhibited in his disposition and habits a convincing proof of the utter inadequacy of human attainments to affect the corrupt bias of the human heart. He appears to have even added to the number of instances in which the greatest mental attainments are associated with the greater inclination to sin; as if the Creator would demonstrate by such cases, that the only source of rectitude is the influence of his Holy Spirit, and that moral weakness and degradation may exist in inverse proportion to intellectual strength.

He was, according to his own confession, at this period much addicted to the amusements of the theatre and of gaming; practices, which although not condemned by any explicit declaration of scripture, are yet infallibly renounced by the regenerated mind as inconsistent with its sympathies and desires. He also discloses, for the purposes no doubt of glorifying the mercy and favour of God in his conversion, that he had been addicted to the sins of profane swearing and sabbath-breaking; that he hailed the festivals of the church as occasions on which he might run into excesses, and derive a miserable antidote to his conscience from the fact that they were instituted as seasons of joy. He describes in terms of genuine humiliation his regret when they ended, and he could no longer mingle with society, and derive from the occasion a plea of unrestrained sensual enjoyments. Along with this absence of goodness in himself he evinced the utmost disdain and contempt for those who illustrated in their character the conduct of the sincere Christian. He expressed his spleen by the usual method of calling names, and says, that he considered when he could include a person within the appellation of Puritan, that he had succeeded in divesting him of all claim to sincerity, talent, or learning. He describes himself to have peculiarly illustrated this disposition upon a commencement Sunday at *Cambridge*. An eminent minister of that day, of the name of Perkins, was to preach. His remaining works show that the estimation in which he was held was truly deserved. He appears to have been regarded with much veneration by several prelates of the church, and

especially by the Bishop of Salisbury of that time. The plain, scriptural discourse delivered by him extremely displeased Mr. Bolton. He pronounced him, he says, a barren, empty fellow, and a passing mean scholar. He evidently expected to hear a learned discourse. His understanding would have been flattered by those self-same truths which were uttered as the oracles of God, being propounded to him in the shape of argument. The conscious pride of intellectual ability would have reconciled him to the sentiments, if they had been thus offered to him; but a simple statement of truth as it is in itself had no charms for him, because he neither recognized the supreme authority of its great author, nor felt its suitableness to his own necessities. It is, however, interesting to remark, that after his conversion Mr. Bolton himself altered his opinion respecting him, and considered him one of the most godly and learned men the church of England had ever enjoyed. He could then perceive another and far superior excellence in his sermons, as consisting in their being an exact impress of the truth of scripture, and as affording accurate descriptions of the agency of spiritual truth upon the human mind.

While he remained at Brazen-nose college he contracted an intimate acquaintance with a gentleman of the name of Anderton, who had been his schoolfellow. He is represented as having been a Roman Catholic at this period, and as having subsequently become an eminent priest. This person seems to have earnestly persuaded Mr. Bolton to enter the Roman Catholic church, promising that his temporal interests also should be greatly advanced by his conversion.

He made a proposal that they should repair to an English seminary on the Continent; and Mr. Bolton so far acceded as to appoint a place and day in Lancashire in which they were to meet, embark, and be gone. Mr. Bolton himself was faithful to his engagement, but some unforeseen accident delayed the arrival of Mr. Anderton: he therefore escaped from his undertaking, and returned to Oxford. He soon after became introduced to an eminent clergyman at Oxford of the name of Peacock; and through conversation with him God was pleased to afford to him the knowledge of the value and method of obtaining eternal life. The process, however, was in his case different from that in most others: it perhaps corresponded to his qualities and habits of mind, and to the purposes which God had intended him to answer in after-life. Instead of the affections yielding under the attractive influence of the love of Christ to mankind, and of his being thus gradually brought to acknowledge the error and danger of his ways, he appears to have been reclaimed with the most appalling terrors. Often did he rise from his bed in the night and pace his chamber under the deepest agitation, upon beholding himself obnoxious to the wrath of a just and holy God. The sins of his past life, which he had either forgotten or not estimated as such, appeared to his distracted conscience in all their multitude and odiousness. He experienced also the greatest augmentation of his misery from the assaults of Satan, his mind being harassed with the most blasphemous and revolting ideas respecting the blessed God. His biographer compares the strength of his convictions of sin to those felt by Luther, who in his epistle to Melancthon describes himself as being ren-

dered by them destitute of speech or sight. This, however, seems in the case of the Reformer to have continued but one day, while the anguish endured by the subject of this sketch lasted for many months. He ultimately however found peace with God, through faith in the efficacy of the atonement, and sufficiency of the righteousness of the Mediator; and then the wisdom of God in this dispensation appeared by the fervent love of his delivered spirit, by his invincible resolution in the work of God, and by an unequalled ability to comprehend and to comfort the distresses of afflicted consciences.

The spontaneous wish of his mind seems to have been, as in many similar instances, to devote himself to the service and honour of that Redeemer, who had thus enabled him to understand and love his character. About the thirty-fifth year of his age, therefore, he was ordained, and applied himself wholly to the engagements of the ministry, devoting all the varied and great resources of his understanding to that most arduous and yet most delightful of all occupations.

Soon after his entrance upon the ministry, he became known to Mr. Justice Nicholls, at that time serjeant at law, who within about two years afterwards presented him to the living of Broughton in Northamptonshire. When his patron announced to him his intention, Dr. King, the bishop of London, happened to be present; and while he thanked him for Mr. Bolton, he assured him that he had by his gift deprived the university of one of its greatest ornaments.

He improved his retirement to a country village by writing his first work, "A Discourse on True Happiness." This he dedicated to his patron. It was soon entirely bought up; and many who were attracted to

the perusal of it by the eloquence of its style, were led again to peruse it out of admiration of the instruction which it contained.

About the fortieth year of his age he married a lady of the name of Royse, and thenceforward devoted himself to the duties of his office with unremitting attention. He preached twice every Sunday during upwards of twenty years, and catechized the children of the parish every Sunday afternoon. Upon every holyday, and on every Friday before the sacrament, he expounded some chapter to his assembled parishioners; and thus in the course of his ministry he went over nearly every chapter of the Old and New Testament. In these exercises, as well as in his sermons, it was remarked by the clergyman who preached his funeral sermon, that he uttered nothing which might not have been delivered before a learned auditory; for though plain enough to be understood by a husbandman, all he said was so truly accurate and scriptural, as that the most enlightened hearer might have listened with satisfaction. His entire aim in his preaching seemed to be to convert the souls of his auditors. This simplicity of intention was peculiarly approved and honoured of God, who by his ministry convinced many hundreds of their spiritual need, and of the ability and willingness of the Saviour to sanctify and to redeem.

He was especially eminent in his addresses to the consciences of his hearers, whether his object was to awaken or to console. He was consequently applied to for his advice by great numbers. Many persons on the Continent proposed cases for his solution. After having been rendered eminently useful in this mode, he published the following invaluable treatise, which may be

considered as the summary of his long experience and profound observations upon one of the most interesting branches in theology.

His mode of preaching seems to have been a combination of earnestness and affection. Thus those who were wounded by his appeals became healed by his consolations. He appears to have been remarkable for his bold and uncompromising exposure of sin in all its destructive and polluting influence upon the sinner; and not less so in his fervent exhortations to all that have believed in God, that for the sake of the gospel, for their present comfort and future reward, they should be careful to maintain good works. Like Luther, he seems to have been prepared to sustain the hatred and violence of the whole world. This led to his consummate impartiality. Totally forgetful of every other distinction among mankind than sin or holiness, he delivered the will of God with an entire disregard of the accidental or acquired distinctions of those present. Still his zeal seems to have been tempered with discretion. He studiously avoids as highly dangerous the *minute* description of his hearers, which might have excited the mere displeasure of the sinner, not against himself, but against the preacher. He appears to have been anxious, at every step of his discourse, to adduce the authority of the scriptures for his assertions; and to this very ready and appropriate usage of the word of God, much of the success of his ministry, as a means subordinate to the influences of the Spirit, may be ascribed. May not one great reason why the discourses of many able and excellent clergymen have not been attended with similar advantage, be sought for in the absence of that marked and even formal appeal to the

word of God, which arms their discourses throughout with a divine authority, while the utmost clearness of statement without it, insensibly affects the hearer as the mere excellent advice of a human being? The practice may possibly be objected to, as producing a roughness of style inconsistent with the finished character of an elaborate sermon; but experience has demonstrated, that the absence of these comparatively trifling qualities has been compensated by the achievement of the great end of the ministry, the conversion of souls.

Another excellence of his ministry appears to have consisted in his free and full offers of salvation to mankind through Christ, and in his thorough and perpetual explanation of the nature and offices of the Mediator. Often would he declare to his people, that it grieved him to preach against their sins, to trouble and annoy their consciences; that he would be happy indeed to preach the riches of the love and power of Christ all his days; but that he knew no other mode of disengaging them from the dominion of Satan, than by urging upon them the consciousness of their unworthiness and liability to perdition.

His piety towards God appears to have been so genuine and full of love, that his entire character, from his conversion to his death, was unmarred by any deviation from the spirit of devotion.

His other excellent volume, "Directions for comfortably walking with God," is said to have been composed by him as a guide for himself, and was not originally intended for publication.

His eminent attainments seem to have originated in his extraordinary habits of devotion. His constant habit was to pray six times in the day. He also kept

days for humiliation, especially before the communion, which he performed with such ardour of spirit, that one of his biographers says, "he used such humility, and such fervency and faith with God, as if he had been a child talking with his parent." So indefatigable were the pains he took, both in preaching and in private devotion, that when his physician advised him to remit his diligence, he rejected his counsel, asserting, that he chose rather to enjoy a sense of communion with Christ, than the utmost strength and serenity of health. As a proof of the simplicity and integrity of his motive, it is said, that he refused to accept of worldly advancement, though frequently offered him from various quarters, simply because he would not be separated from that scene in which his labours had been so useful; estimating, after the correct manuer, his respectability as a minister, not by the possession of lucrative offices, but by the extent of his usefulness. Amid all these singular qualifications, his wisdom shone pre-eminent, insomuch that although he preached twenty-two years with the greatest success and celebrity, no man even in those captious times could impugn his doctrines,—another result of his habit of incessantly proving the truth of his assertions by the declarations of scripture.

His singular charity must also be enumerated. From the time he first possessed his living till his death, he spent its entire revenues in the decent maintenance of his family and in charity: he forbore to accumulate. The poor of the village found in him a wise and ready friend. Real distress made known its necessities with the confidence of obtaining relief; while fictitious wants, or those induced by dissipation, were seldom

obtruded upon his attention, owing to the penetration with which he ascertained the real nature of an application. Upon occasion of a very destructive fire, he so interested the neighbouring gentry in the necessities of his poor parishioners who had suffered, that without aid from the government he caused their habitations to be rebuilt, and their present wants to be supplied.

The time, however, of his departure drew nigh soon after this event. A quartan ague attacked him in the month of September before his death. The violence of the paroxysms, and the weakness which it occasioned, rendered it evident that it was attended with the greatest danger. At a very early period of his illness he finally adjusted his worldly concerns, and then gave himself up to preparation for death. He had announced to his people his intention of preaching to them upon the four last things, Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven; a favourite division in his days of the most solemn truths of the scriptures. He proceeded through his course as far as the last; but on the preceding Saturday he became more seriously indisposed, and never again ascended his pulpit. His illness however was greatly protracted, and often very painful.

It is said, that during the intermissions of his disorder he was often heard to exclaim, "Oh, when will this good hour come? when shall I be dissolved? when shall I be with Christ?" Being told that it would be better for him to depart and to be with Christ; but that it would be more profitable to his people that he should remain, he replied in the language of David, "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it

and his habitation : but if otherwise ; lo, here I am, let him do what seemeth him good unto me" (2 Sam. xv, 25, 26). He was asked by some one else, if he would not be content to live, if God should grant him life : he replied in language which demonstrates the strength and sincerity of his religious principles, "I grant that this life is a blessing from God ; neither will I neglect any means that may preserve it, and do greatly desire to submit to the will of God ; but of the two, I infinitely desire to depart and to be with Christ."

Great numbers of persons came to see him during his last illness. He admitted but few however, urging as his reason, that he might have the more time for preparation to meet his God. To those who were admitted, he gave earnest and affectionate advice, agreeably to their respective occupations in life. In these conversations with them the powers of his mind seemed to exhibit their former vigour. He exhorted the ministers who came with the greatest love, that they would bear courageously the afflictions that might come upon them. He admonished others that they should without delay seek the Saviour, and devote themselves to his service. About a week before his death he entreated his wife to bear his dissolution, which he perceived to be at hand, with Christian fortitude. He then addressed his children, and admonished them that he had instructed them during their whole life, and "was persuaded that none of them durst think to meet him at the great tribunal in an unregenerate state."

About two days before his death some of his parishioners coming to watch with him, one of them requested, that as he had discovered to them by doctrine

the excellency of Christ, he would now describe to them for their encouragement what comforts he found in trusting to the Redeemer: "Alas!" said he, "do you look for that of me now, that want breath and power to speak. I have told you enough in my lifetime: but to give you satisfaction, I am by the wonderful mercies of God as full of comfort as my heart can hold, and feel nothing in my soul but Christ, with whom I heartily desire to be."

The night before he died, he was informed that some of his dearest friends were around him to take their last farewell: he rose up in his bed, and shaking them all by the hand, prayed heartily for them, and desired them to make sure of heaven; to bear in mind what he had told them in his ministry, and assured them that the doctrine which he had preached to them by the space of twenty years was the truth of God. Desiring to be laid down again he spoke no more till the next morning, when he took the last leave of his wife and children, and blessed them all; and that day in the afternoon about five o'clock, the 17th day of December 1631, in the sixtieth year of his age, he entered into his heavenly rest.

Thus terminated the career of this truly valuable man. It seems to have been his happiness to pass his time in rest and quietness, although England generally was the scene of religious contention. This exemption from annoyance and reproach he owed not to a neutrality which complies with, or to a timidity which evades commotions. He sustained a prominent and decided part in the contentions of his times, but passed through them invulnerable to the attacks of calumny, owing to the eminent pureness of his motives, and the direction of all his conduct by a sanctified and enligh-

tened conscience. He was a man in whom his friends had nothing to regret, except that his exertions in the cause of God probably shortened his days; and whom his greatest enemies could accuse with nothing but that he preached too often and lived too precisely. His works contain accurate and extraordinarily comprehensive views of the truths of revelation, and his description of their influence upon the affections of the human heart are profound and correct. They possess also an additional excellency, which did not always attend the religious writings of his age, or even of our own, they are expressed in language devoid of *technical* or *peculiar* phrases. He has written in the same style that an enlightened contemporary would have done upon a subject of English literature. He has thus evinced among many other valuable writers since his time, that every truth and every doctrine *may* be expressed in *the ordinary language of mankind*: his writings are consequently free from those peculiarities of style which are sometimes so used as to render obscure what is plain, and to darken still more what is really mysterious.

Salisbury Square, Fleet Street,  
September, 1831.

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# INSTRUCTIONS

FOR

## COMFORTING AFFLICTED CONSCIENCES.

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*“The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity ; but a wounded spirit who can bear ?”*—PROV. xviii, 14.

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### SECT. I, PART I.

#### CHAP. I.

The Introduction. The Contents of the Text. The First Doctrine raised and proved by Two Reasons.

MY text lies, as you see, in a sacred cabinet of richest jewels ; I mean the most select and wisest aphorisms, or proverbs, that ever issued out of a mortal brain. Every one of them for the most part, especially from the tenth chapter, independent, entire, and absolute in themselves ; clear and manifest by their own native brightness ; not needing such reciprocal light and lustre for each other's mutual discovery and interpretation ; and therefore they are naturally not capable of any coherent logical analysis, and other circumstantial expositions, ordinarily incident to other parts of scripture. Whence it is that this book of Proverbs is compared to a great heap of gold rings, rich and orient severally, and every one shining with a distinct lustre by itself ; but other texts of Holy Writ to gold chains, so interwoven and enlinked together, that they must upon necessity, for the rendering unto us aright and fully their several senses, be enlightened and receive mutual illustration one from another.

This present proverb doth represent unto us the extremest hell upon earth, the greatest misery and most in-

supportable that can possibly befall a man in this life; I mean the horror of a guilty and enraged conscience: which is set out,

First, by the excellency of its opposite: the invincible ability and mighty strength of that truly stout and heroical heart, which is happily upholden with the heavenly refreshing influence of grace, God's favour, and a good conscience: "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity."

Secondly, by the heaviness of its attribute, the intolerableness of it: "But a wounded spirit who can bear?"

From the former, the courage of a heart upholden with grace, take this first note:—

*Doctr.* The spirit of a man, furnished with grace and fortified with the sense of God's favour, is able to pass through the pikes and conquer all comers.

I. For what, and why should that man fear or faint, on whose side the mighty Lord of heaven and earth doth stand? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii, 31. Whose mercy to his is without all stint and limit, like himself, infinite; so immeasurable, that it reacheth "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm ciii, 17); so tender, that it surpasseth incomprehensibly the compassionate meltings of the most loving mother (Isa. xlix, 15); and spared not the dearest blood of his only Son (Rom. viii, 32); who hath ever in readiness for the recovery of his children out of the most desperate danger, and to rescue them out of the hands of the deadliest enemy (besides his own omnipotent arm, the least finger whereof can beat the greatest mountain to powder and rend the hardest rock in pieces), innumerable hosts of angels, one of which killed an hundred fourscore and five thousand in one night (2 Kings xix, 35); chariots of fire, even a thousand chariots in the whirlwind; that fair glorious giant which with incredible swiftness runs post as it were through the sky, to stand still, or retire; the impetuous current of the raging sea to recoil; the merciless flames of the hungry fire to become a soft and refreshing air; the implacable fury of the most enraged lions to couch at the first word for his servant's sake and safety.—Nay, if need be, he hath caterpillars and frogs, worms and lice, even the most impotent and vilest vermin to fetch blood and take down the heart of the proudest tyrant upon earth, carry he his head never so high; to eat out the bowels of the bloodiest Nimrod or mightiest monarch that wears a crown upon his head, if he oppose his people. He hath the very hearts and consciences (Matt. xxvii, 5; 2 Sam. xvii, 23) of all that rise up against them, to bring their own blood upon their own heads, and even hell and extremest horror upon

their hearts in this life. What then so dreadful a face of present confusions or fore-imagined forms of future troubles are able or ought slavishly to deject and terrify that holy heart, which with a sweet and safe repose is happily and everlastingly hid under the wings of that mighty God (Ruth ii, 12; Psalm xci, 4), who for the deliverance of his can work,

1. By weak means; see Judg. vii; 1 Sam. xiv; Gen. xiv; 1 Sam. xvii; Judg. iv, 21, and ix, 53.

2. Without means; see 2 Chron. xx; Exod. xiv; Josh. vi; 2 Kings xix; 2 Chron. xiv.

3. Contrary to means; see Dan. vi, 22; Josh. iii, 16; Dan. iii, 25, 26; Jonah ii, 6; Josh. x, 12, 13, 14.

II. When the heavenly beams of God's pleased countenance begin to break out upon a man through the dark and hellish mist of his manifold and heinous sins, the unquenchable heat of his everlasting love through Christ dissolving them into nothing, and fairly shine with a comfortable aspect upon his humbled soul, *ipso facto*, heaven and earth, and all the hosts of both, are everlastingly reconciled unto him and become his friends: the storms and tempests raised by all the powers of hell are presently calmed for ever doing him any deadly hurt. All the creatures then pull in their horns, withdraw their stings, bite in their poison, checked and awed by those divine impressions of their Creator's blessed image stamped upon them by the Spirit of grace; and dare no more offer any violence or vexation to him (except upon particular dispensation for his spiritual good and quickening) than to the apple of God's own eye. Hear the promise from God's own mouth: "And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely" (Hos. ii, 18). Nay, they are so far from charging their several stings upon the saints, that they will change their very natures to do them service. They will rather become an astonishment and horror to the whole creation than they be hurt. How often have they suspended and put off their native power and properties for the protection and good of God's people? The very sea, that most raging and roaring creature, must stay his course and current to give passage and preservation to a true Israelite; the stars must fight and the sun stand still for the aid and advantage of God's armies; the lions must leave their savage rage and trade of blood, and become lambs and loving unto a Daniel; the ravens will feed an Elijah; the flames of fire must hold in their heat from burning a Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-

nego ; the devouring belly of a dreadful fish must be turned into a sanctuary of safety to a Jonah ; a popish furnace heated with the very malice of hell shall become a bed of down and roses to a martyr of Jesus \* ; the very dead lines of an ordinary letter, must represent to a royal mind a meaning quite contrary to the natural sense and all grammatical construction, before a b'essed parliament be blown up with popish gunpowder † ; a brittle glass must rebound unbroken from the hardest stone, to help to bind up a broken heart bleeding with grief for absence of her spouse and want of the assurance of his love ‡. Nay, the devil himself, though he walks about like a roaring lion, seeking with restless rage and desiring infinitely to devour the Lord's inheritance, yet cannot possibly add one link to the chain in which by the merciful and mighty hand of God he is hampered, nor go an hair's breadth beyond his commission : and though it be utterly impossible that that damned angel should so far change his devilish nature as to do any of God's chosen directly any true good, yet he is everlastingly muzzled by an Almighty arm from ever doing them any deadly hurt. He may be suffered sometimes to shake his chain at them, and roar upon them hideously, to drive them nearer unto God and fright them from sin ; but he shall never, either in this world or the world to come, have his full swing at them, or fasten his hellish fangs upon their redeemed souls.

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## CHAP. II.

Three other Reasons proving the former Doctrine.

III. Besides all that other excellent, complete, impenetrable armour of proof, mentioned Ephes. vi, which is able to beat back victoriously all earthly oppositions, and the very ordnance of hell, every one of God's favourites is also blessedly furnished with a mighty spiritual engine, which is able to batter down all the bulwarks of the devil, to shake the whole kingdom of darkness and all hellish powers ; nay, to offer an holy violence to the very throne of God himself ; witness his most mercifully entreating Moses to let him alone (Exod. xxxii, 10), as though the mediation of a man could bind as it were (I speak it with lowliest reverence to that Highest Majesty) the hands of his omnipotency from doing his people any hurt, and were able to extinguish that

\* The declaration of Bainham. while burning.

† King James's interpretation of the anonymous letter by which the Gunpowder Plot was discovered.

‡ See Yates's God's arraignment of Hypocrites, p. 357.

unquenchable wrath in the conception, which once on foot would "burn unto the lowest hell, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains,"—I mean that most precious, and almost, if not altogether, omnipotent grace of *Prayer*. This great master of miracles hath wrought from time to time many and very remarkable wonders, both in heaven and earth. It made the sun, that mighty creature, the prince of all the lights in heaven, to stay and stand still upon the sudden in the heat of his swiftest course (Josh. x, 12, 13); it landed Jonah safely upon the shore out of the belly of the whale and bowels of the sea (Jonah ii, 1, 10); it drew refreshing streams out of a dry bone for the saving of Samson's life (Judges xv, 18, 19); it turned the heaven into brass for three years and a half, and afterward turned the self-same brass into fruitful clouds and fountains of rain (James v, 17, 18); it killed a hundred fourscore and five thousand of the enemies of God's people in one night (2 Kings xix, 15—35); for the freeing of Elisha from a strait and dangerous siege it filled a mountain in a moment, as it were, "full of horses and chariots of fire" (2 Kings vi, 17); it turned the swords of a mighty army into the bowels of one another, when Jehoshaphat knew not which way to turn himself, but was so helpless and hopeless that he cried unto the Lord, "We know not what to do, only our eyes are upon thee (2 Chron. xx, 5—23); it loosed Peter out of prison, shook his chains off from his hands, and made an iron gate to open of its own accord (Acts xii, 5, 7, 10); it enraged and enlarged the English seas to swallow up the Spanish invincible armada; and, which is none of the least wonders, it brought prince Charles out of Spain.

But you instance, may some say, in extraordinary examples of extraordinary men, endowed with an extraordinary spirit.

Yet sure I am they are registered by the Holy Ghost to represent unto us and to all generations of the church to the world's end the almighty and wonder-working power of prayer; and I am as sure that the petitioners were men "subject to like passions as we are" (James v, 17). Perhaps if thou be a true hearted Nathanael, since thy new birth thou wast never so extraordinarily passionate as Jonah was, when out of a pang of strange distemper he thus answered the mighty Lord of heaven and earth, "I do well to be angry, even unto death" (Jonah iv, 9).

IV. God's favourite is further furnished with another spiritual weapon of impregnable temper and incredible might; I mean *faith*, the very power and arm of God for

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMFORTING

all true joy, sound comfort, and lightness at the heart-root in this life. This crowned empress of all those heavenly graces that dwell in the soul of a sanctified man, and which in a right sense may be said virtually to comprehend all the beauty, strength, excellency, and power of Christ himself, is truly victorious and triumphant over all the world (1 John v, 4); over the very gates of hell and all the powers of darkness (Matt. xvi, 18); over the devil's most fiery darts (Eph. vi, 16); over the devouring flames of the raging fire; over the roaring fury of the most hungry lions; over the variety and extremity of the most exquisite tortures, temptations, persecutions; all outward miseries, even over cruel mockings: it irresistibly beats down or blows up the strongest bulwarks and thickest walls, puts to flight the mightiest armies, and conquers the most invincible kingdoms (Heb. xi, 30, 33—37); and when all is done, O blessed faith, at the very last and deadliest lift, she triumphantly sets her foot upon the neck of the prince of terrors, I mean death, the last and worst, the end and sum of all feared evils (Psalm xxiii, 4); and even in the midst of those dying and dreadful pangs bears a glorious part with Jesus Christ the conqueror in that sweetest song of victory, "O death, where is thy sting?" In a word, it can do all things: "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark ix, 23).

V. In a word, *grace* in its own nature being the most glorious creature of the Father of lights, and flowing as it were more immediately and sweetly from his blessed face, is of such a divine, invincible, and lightsome temper, and hath such an antipathy, such vigour and ability against all spiritual darkness and damps, whether of affliction, temptation, troublesome confusions of the times, "the valley of the shadow of death," the grave, hell itself; that it is ever able either to dispel it or dissolve it, or support itself strongly and triumphantly even in the midst of it. Suppose a soul beautified with grace to be seated, if it were possible, in the very centre of that hellish kingdom, yet would it by its heavenly strength and glory, in despite of all infernal powers, keep off at some distance all the darkness, torments, and horror of that damned place. Whence it is that it is so often in the holy scriptures compared to light. Now what power and prevalent antipathy our ordinary light doth exercise against his most abhorred opposite, darkness, you well know; and it is elegantly and punctually for my purpose expressed by one in this manner: "We see and prove," saith he, "by daily experience how powerful and dreadful a thing the darkness of the night is. For when it falleth it

covereth and muffleth up the face of the whole world. It obscureth and hideth the hue and the fashion of all creatures; it bindeth up all hands and breaketh off all employments. The night cometh, saith our Saviour, wherein we cannot work. It arresteth and keepeth captive all living creatures, men and beasts, that they must be still and rest where it arresteth them; yea it maketh them fearful and faint-hearted, full of fancies, and much subject to frights. It is of all others such a powerful and unconquerable tyrant as no man is able to withstand; and yet nevertheless it is not of that might that it is able to overwhelm or to quench the least light in the world. For we see the darker the night is, the clearer the stars shine; yea the least candle's light that is lighted withstandeth the whole night, and not only suffereth not the darkness to cover, or to smother and oppress it, but it giveth light also, even in the midst of the darkness, and beateth it back for some space and distance on every side of it; so that which way soever it is borne, or wheresoever it cometh, there must darkness depart and give place unto the light; all the power and dreadfulnes of it cannot help or prevail aught against it. And though the light be so weak that it cannot cast light far about, or drive the darkness far from it, as in the spark of a hot coal, yet cannot the darkness cover or conceal, and much less quench it, but it giveth light to itself alone at least, so that it may be seen afar off in the dark, and it remaineth unconquered of the dark, though it cannot help other things nor give light unto them. Yea, that which is yet more wonderful, a rotten shining piece of wood, which hath the faintest light that can be found, yet remaineth invincible of all the power of darkness, and the more it is compassed about with darkness the clearer light it giveth. So little is darkness able to overcome or keep down any light, but that it ruleth and vanquisheth and expelleth the darkness, which else overwhelmeth and snareth, and fettereth, and putteth all things in fear. Now if this natural light be so powerful and so able to prevail against the darkness of the night, why should not that spiritual light that God's Spirit doth kindle and set up in the hearts of God's children be able to afford them light in darkness, and to minister sound joy and sweet comfort unto them in the very midst of their heaviest and most hideous afflictions." Assuredly it must needs be unconquerably able, with far greater power and in an higher proportion. For our visible light doth spring but from a finite and material fountain, the sun, itself a creature; but the spiritual light I speak of, flows immediately from the glorious face of the only true, incomprehensible

and eternal Light (1 John i, 5), the sun's creator, "who dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto," and is an everlasting well-spring of all life and light, which it doth so far represent and resemble in Divine excellency and mightiness, that it thence receives by a secret and sacred influence fresh successions still of an infinite triumphant power, and prevaieth against all spiritual darkness for ever. Suppose all the men that dwell within the compass of our hemisphere should address themselves with all their wit and weapons, with all their power and policy, to keep back that universal darkness which is wont to seize upon the face of the earth at the setting of the sun, yet by all this strong and combined opposition they should but beat the air. But now upon the very first approach of that princely light but peeping up in the east, it would all fly away in a moment and vanish into nothing. In a similar manner, if all the understandings upon earth, and all the angels in heaven, should contribute all their abilities and excellences to enlighten with cheerfulness and joy a guilty conscience, surprised sometimes with hellish darkness and clouds of horror upon sight of sin and sense of Divine wrath, yet all would not do; they should all the while but wash a Blackmoor. But now let but the least glimpse of the light of grace shine into that sad and heavy soul, and it would far more easily and irresistibly chase away the very darkest midnights of any spiritual misery, than the strongest summer's sun would dispel the thinnest morning's mist. Give me, if you will, Judas's heart, or Spira's horror, or a vexed spirit torn and rent in pieces with the raging guilt of both those woful men, and let that supposed rueful soul, weary of its hellish burthen, and thirsting sincerely for the "water of life," but cast itself upon the mercy, truth, and power of the Lord Jesus, so sweetly offering himself in that precious promise (Matt. xi, 28), resolving to take him for an everlasting husband; and, *ipso facto*, it might be put into a very heaven upon earth. For this glorious grace of faith, the prince of all spiritual light and lightsomeness in the truly humbled soul, thus shed into such a dark and grieved spirit, doth enkindle and set on shining all those gracious heavenly stars that are wont to beautify the hearts of holy men; hope, love, zeal, son-like fear, humility, patience, self-denial, universal obedience, fruitfulness in all good works, &c., which make them light itseif to walk in the light towards the infinite and unapproachable Light; and therefore they never need to want lightsomeness, but have perpetual matter of spiritual mirth and mightiness of spirit.

## CHAP III.

Three pair of instances confirming the former doctrine; David and Saul, Job and Abithophel, Luther and Spira.

THE point appears and is further proved by manifest and manifold experience. David having been formerly woefully wasted with great variety and extremity of dangers and distresses, was at last plunged into a most desperate perplexity (1 Sam. xxx, 6), which had been able to have swallowed up into despair the manliest vigour of the greatest spirit upon earth not supported with grace (the like, or a less, caused king Saul to fall upon his own sword, 1 Sam. xxxi, 4); yet he, blessed man, by the power of his spiritual peace, and the beams of God's pleased face shining upon his soul, did patiently and sweetly comfort himself in the Lord his God, and stood like an impregnable rock, unshaken with the raging assaults of any tempestuous surges. He was at this time hunted by Saul like a partridge in the mountains; cashiered by the princes of the Philistines as a fellow of suspected fidelity; robbed by the Amalekites of his wives, his sons, and his daughters; the town to which he returned for safety was burnt with fire; and, to make his calamity complete and most cutting, even his own men were ready to stone him. Now in this great distress, upon the first apprehension whereof he wept, as the story saith, "until he had no more power to weep," yet coming to himself, and recollecting his spiritual forces, his heavy heart, ready to sink and fall asunder in his bosom, did fetch, by the hand of faith, comfortably fortified by sense and experience of former favours, such heavenly strength from Jehovah, whom he had made his portion, that thereupon his courage was revived and raised to that height, that he presently pursued his enemies with extraordinary valour and resolution, cut them off and recovered all. "And David," saith the text, "was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God," &c.

What a bitter sea of unmatched miseries did break out upon blessed Job, which with a sudden unexpected violence bearing down that hedge of protection which God had set about him (the rains purposely let loose by Divine dispensation to Satan's malice in the mean time), did fearfully overflow him to that height and horror, that he stands re-

gistered in God's book as an unparalleled instance of extraordinary sufferings and sorrows, calamities and conflicts, to all succeeding ages, no story being able to afford the like. The natural death of one dear child strikes sometimes so heavy to a man's heart, that for grief he falls into a consumption; but all Job's were suddenly taken away at once by a violent stroke. Some petty cross upon his outward state, and cutting off but part of his goods, causes sometimes a covetous worldling to cut his own throat; but Job was robbed of all, so that it is a proverb to this day, "as poor as Job." Many wives are passionate and peevish in time of prosperity, whose hearts notwithstanding will melt in compassion and kindness over their husbands in any kind of misery; but Job's wife, though dearly entreated by her most distressed husband even for their children's sake, the mutual common pledges of sweetest love, yet would not come near him. "My breath," saith he, "is strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children's sake of mine own body" (chap. xix, 17). Satan, I confess, is wont to roar and rage fiercely enough about God's blessed ones, to do them all the mischief he can possibly; but rarely hath he so large a reach and his chain so lengthened as he had against Job. The painful anguish of some one part would not only deprive a man of the pleasure of the world's monarchy if he had it in possession, but also make him weary of his life. In what a taking then was Job, who from the sole of his foot unto his crown had no part free from sore biles and horribly inflamed ulcers, exasperated and enraged with the stinging smart of Satan's extremest malice, who had power given him to inflict them. God himself frowns many times, and withdraws the beams of his pleased face from the souls of his servants to their great grief, though for their spiritual good; but seldom doth he set them up for his mark, hunt them as a fierce lion, set his terrors in array against them, and command the poison of his arrows to drink up their spirit, as Job complains, chap. xix, 13; x, 16; vi, 4.

It is no strange thing, neither should it much move, but only make us walk more watchfully, to hear men of the world and drunken Belials to belch out from their rotten hearts upon the ale-bench such base slanders as these: "These professors, for all their fair shows, are certainly all of them notorious hypocrites. Though they look never so demurely, they are not the men they are taken for," &c. But to have a man's nearest, familiar, understanding Christian friends to charge him with hypocrisy, is a most cruel cut to a troubled conscience: and this was Job's case.

Thus as Job was singular in the universality of his afflictions, so there was a singularity of bitterness above ordinary in every particular affliction. And what of all this? And yet for all this, this holy man, by the help of that precious hoard of grace which his heavenly heart had treasured up in the time of prosperity, out of that spiritual strength which he had gotten into his soul by his former humble acquaintance and conversation with his God, and knowing full well that though all was gone, yet he still possessed Jesus Christ as fully, if not more feelingly, as ever before, he becomes hereupon as rare and admirable a pattern of patience to all posterity, as he was an extraordinary, astonishing spectacle of adversity and woe. Consciousness of his forespent righteous life, which he peruseth chap. xxxi; the clearness of a good conscience, chap. xvi, 19; "Behold my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high;" and his invincible faith, chap. xix, 23, 24, 25, "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen, and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c.; chap. xiii, 15; "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;"—did so strengthen and stay his spirit with a divine might, that he bore valiantly and stood upright under the heaviest weight and greatest variety of extreme afflictions that ever were laid upon any mere man. But now, on the other side, the tithe, nay the ten hundredth part of Job's troubles, caused graceless Ahithophel to saddle his ass, get himself home, put his household in order, and hang himself. So true is that which the blessed prophet tells us, Jer. xvii, 5—8, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

This impregnable comfort springing from grace and a good conscience, even in evil times, did steel the spirit of blessed Luther with such spiritual stoutness, and so hardened his forehead against a world, nay a horrible hell of most reproachful and raging oppositions, that he became a spectacle, a miracle of rarest Christian fortitude and invincible courage to the whole world and to all posterity. I

am persuaded, that holy truth of God which he so gloriously professed, and that power of godliness which he so faithfully practised, did infuse into the heart of that man as much unconquerableness of resolution and fearlessness of the face of man, as ever dwelt in any mortal breast since the time of the apostles. Witness among the rest that one extraordinary expression of his incomparable magnanimity, when his friends were earnest and eager upon him not to venture himself among a number of perfidious papists and bloodthirsty tigers, he replied thus: "As touching me," saith he, "since I am sent for, I am resolved, and certainly determined to enter Worms in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; yea, though I knew there were as many devils to resist me as there are tiles to cover the houses in Worms." This man of God did upon the two pillars of his heroic heart, courage and patience, most nobly sustain the malice and hatred almost of the whole world. The devil and the pope did concurrently countermined with all their cruelty and cunning against this victorious champion of heaven and mighty underminer of their dark and damned kingdoms. Almost all the princes, priests, and people of Christendom did breed and breathe out nothing but thoughts of indignation and threats of death against him. Millions of lazy and lustful monks, having like so many pestilent locusts of the infernal pit, seized upon the face of Europe with their envenomed swarms, and lying at ease, enclloistered in the vilest crimes, gnashed their teeth at him with hellish fury, and like true fiends spat fire in his face; and yet for all this, this holy saint (which I admire more and prize higher than the victories of a thousand Cesars, or the most renowned valour of the greatest Alexander) having so many incarnate devils continually roaring about him with open mouth, ready every hour, and enraged with implacable thirst to drink up his blood, and swallow him up quick, yet, I say, enjoyed such a triumphant tranquillity of mind and unshaken presence of spirit, that like a mighty son of thunder, by his constant and powerful preaching for the space of nine and twenty years so shook the pillars of popery, that I am persuaded the beast will never stand upon his four legs any more; and wrote eloquently and excellently almost if not as many volumes as Austin did, that great glory of the Christian world in former times. A petty cross will frequently so emasculate and weaken the elevation of the greatest wit, that his conceit, invention, and style will fall to a far lower strain than ordinary, which contentment and calmness would raise to their highest pitch and possibility. But the terrible earthquake as it were of all Europe,

and contrary commotions of Christendom, did never a whit disanimate or shake the heart of this heavenly man, fitly honoured by the name of a third Elias.

But now Francis Spira on the other side, having out of his inordinate love to the things of this life wofully wounded his conscience by that infamous abjuration of the blessed truth which he formerly professed, became a spectacle of such spiritual misery and woe to the whole world, that there is not any thing left unto the memory of man more remarkable.

Upon the very first revisal of his recantation, and serious consideration in cold blood what he had done, he acknowledged himself utterly undone and for ever. His spirit suddenly smitten with the dreadful sense of Divine wrath for his apostacy, and split in pieces as it were with so grievous a bruise, fainted fearfully, failed him quite, and fell asunder in his breast like drops of water. Hear some rueful expressions of his desperate state from his own mouth: "Oh that I were gone from hence, that somebody would let out this weary soul! I tell you there was never such a monster as I am; never was man alive a spectacle of such exceeding misery. I now feel God's heavy wrath, that burns like the torments of hell within me, and afflicts my soul with pangs unutterable. Verily desperation is hell itself. The gnawing worm of unquenchable fire, horror, confusion, and, which is worst of all, desperation itself, continually tortures me. And now I count my present estate worse than if my soul separated from my body were with Judas, and therefore I desire rather to be there than thus to live in my body. The truth is, never had mortal man such experience of God's anger and hatred against him as I have. If I could conceive but the least spark of hope in my heart of a better state hereafter, I would not refuse to endure the most heavy wrath of the great God, yea for two thousand years, so that at length I might emerge out of misery." He professed that his pangs were such as that the damned souls in hell endure not the like misery; that his state was worse than that of Cain or Judas, and therefore desired to die. "Oh that God would let loose his hand from me, and that it were with me now as in times past: I would scorn the threats of the most cruel tyrants, bear torments with invincible resolution, and glory in the outward profession of Christ, till I were choked in the flame and my body turned into ashes."

## CHAP. IV.

A first use of the former doctrine, for exhortation to store up heavenly comforts in our hearts. Two considerations which press this exhortation upon us.

IF it be so, then, that a heavenly hoard of grace, good conscience, God's favour, &c., happily treasured up while it is called to-day, hath the sole and sacred property and privilege to hold up our hearts in times of horror, enabling us in the mean time patiently and profitably to master all miseries, pass through all persecutions, conquer all comers, and at length, by the help of God, to pull the very heart, as it were, out of hell; with confidence and triumph to look even death and the devil in the face, and to stand with boldness before the terror of the last day like an immovable rock, when the sons and daughters of confusion, who have slept in harvest and mispent the gracious day of their visitation, shall entreat the mountains and rocks to fall upon them; — I say, it being thus, let every one of us, like sons and daughters of wisdom, in this short summer's day of our abode upon earth, and in this glorious sun-shine of the gospel and precious seasons of grace, employ all means, improve all opportunities to gather in with all holy greediness and treasure up abundantly much spiritual strength and lasting comfort against the evil day. To which let us be quickened by such considerations as these:—

1. This wise and happy treasuring up of heavenly hoards and comforts of holiness beforehand, will sweetly mollify and allay the bitterness and smart of that heaviness and sorrow, of those fearful amazements and oppressions of spirit, naturally incident to times of trouble and fear, which ordinarily do very grievously sting and strike through the heart of carnal and secure worldlings with full rage and the very flashes and foretastes of hell. Of all other passions of the soul, sadness and grief grates most upon the vital spirits, dries up soonest the freshest marrow in the bones, and most sensibly sucks out the purest and most refined blood in the heart. All the objects of lightsomeness and joy are drowned in a heavy heart, even as the beauty of a pearl is dissolved in vinegar. Now the only cordial and counterpoison against this damp of light-heartedness and destroyer of life, is the secret sweetness and shining pleasure of that "one pearl of great price" (Matt. xiii, 46), three orient rays whereof are "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv, 17), treasured up in the cabinet of

a good conscience. The glory, preciousness, and power of which hidden treasure, purchased with the sale of all sin, doth many times shine most fairly upon the soul in the saddest times, inspires for the most part into the hearts of the owners the greatest courage and constancy of spirit, even in the days of adversity and vexation, and enables them to digest and bear without any great wound or passion those crosses and cruelties which would break the back and crush the heart of the stoutest temporizer. Was there not a great deal of difference think you betwixt the heart of Hezekiah, who had walked before God "in truth and with a perfect heart" (Isa. xxxviii, 3) when he heard the news of death from the mouth of the prophet, and the heart of Belshazzar when he saw the handwriting upon the wall? (Dan. v, 5, 6.) Give me a great man who carries away the credit and current of the times, with all bravery and triumph wallows and tumbles himself in the glory and pleasures of the present; throw him from the transitory top of his heaven upon earth upon his last bed, present unto his eye at once the terrible pangs of approaching death, the rageful malice of the powers of hell, the crying wounds of his bleeding conscience, the hideous forms of his innumerable sins, his final farewell with all worldly delights, the pit of fire and brimstone into which he is ready to fall, and I tell you true, I would not endure an hour's horror of his woful heart, for his present paradise to the world's end. But on the other side, let me be the man whom the corruptions of the time confine to obscurity, who mourns in secret for the horrible abominations and crying sins that reign among us, who thinks that day best spent wherein he hath gathered most spiritual strength against that last and sorest combat; and by the mercies of God and humble dependence upon his omnipotent arm, I will look in the face the cruellest concurrence of all those former terrors with confidence and peace.

2. By this spiritual hoarding of comfortable provision against the evil day, we may prevent a great deal of impatience, dependence upon the arm of flesh, base fears, sinkings of heart, unmanly dejections of spirit, desperate resolutions, and many passionate distempers of such raging and distracted nature, which are wont to seize upon and surprise unholy and unprepared hearts when the hand of God is heavy upon them. How bravely and heroically did patient Job bear and break through a matchless variety and extremity of calamities and conflicts, the softest of whose sufferings would have struck full cold to the heart of many a carnalist, and made it to die within him like a stone, as Nabal's did! One of the least, the loss of his goods, I am

persuaded would have caused many covetous worldlings to have laid violent hands upon themselves; for instance, Ahithophel, only because the glory of his state wisdom was obscured and overtopped at the council board, saddled his ass, gat him home, put his household in order, and hanged himself. The only cause of his fainting in the day of disgrace and non-acceptation was his false and rotten heart in matters of religion. While the crown sat with security and safety upon David's head, he walked with him as a companion unto the house of God. But when the wind began to blow a little another way, and upon Absalom's side, like a true timeserver, he follows the blast, and turns his sails according to the weather; and therefore his hollow heart, having made the arm of flesh his anchor, and a vanishing blaze of honour his chiefest blessedness, shrinks at the very first sight and suspicion of a tempest, and sinks this miserable man into a sea of horror. Now, on the contrary, what was the cause that Job's heart was not crushed in pieces under the bitter concurrence of such a world of crosses, of which any one severally was sufficient to have made a man extremely miserable? The true reason of his patient resolution amid so many pressures was the spiritual riches he had hoarded up in the time of his happiness; amongst which the divinest and dearest jewel lay nearest unto his heart, as a counterpoison to the venom and sting of the devil's deadliest malice; I mean a sound and strong faith in Jesus Christ, "the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," which now began to shine the fairest in the darkest midnight of his miseries, and sweetly to dart out many heavenly sparks of comfort, and such glorious ejaculations as these: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (chap. xiii, 15); and that, chap. xix, 23, et seq., "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever. For I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. There were two cutting and cruel circumstances largely insinuated, chap. xxix and xxx, which did keenly sharpen the edge and mightily aggravate the weight of Job's miseries. The one was this, he had been happy. Now, as that man's happiness is holden the greatest who hath been in a miserable condition, for he tasteth the double sweet, of remembering his forepast misery and enjoying his present felicity; so, on the contrary, it is accounted the greatest misery to have been happy. The other was that which most nettles a generous nature, he being a man of so great honour and worth, whose rare and incomparable wisdom even the princes and nobles adored, with a secret and silent

admiration, as appears chap. xxix, 9, 10, was now contemned of the most contemptible. "The children of fools and the children of base men," that were "viler than the earth," make him their song and their bye-word (chap. xxx, 8, 9). For when true nobleness and worth is down, and any one of the Lord's champions dejected, it is ordinary with all those cowardly dispositions, to whom his sincerity was an eye-sore, his power and authority a restraint to their lewdness, the glory of his virtues fuel to their envy, to run as a raven to the fallen sheep to pick out his eyes; I mean (which yet tastes of a truly cowardly and merciless constitution), to wound his very wounds, and to vex his vexations. This was Job's case.

But what now ministers comfort to Job's heart against these corrosives? Even consciousness of his graces and integrities, treasured up and exercised in the days of his peace. He reckons up fourteen of them, chap. xxxi. From consideration hereof he gathers towards the end this triumphant resolution against the sorest of his sufferings, "I would even crown mine head with the bitterest invective of my greatest adversary." Whence it is clear, that the two potent pillars of Job's strong and strange patience, which generations will admire to the world's end, were a sound faith and the sanctified fruits thereof, prepared and practised in the time of his prosperity.

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## CHAP. V.

A third consideration, pressing the former exhortation, defended against Machiavel's position.

3. By previous provision of God's favour, grace, good conscience, and such spiritual store, we shall be able worthily to adorn and honour our profession, truly to ennoble and win a great deal of glory and reputation to the state of Christianity, when the ambitious rufflers and boisterous Nimrods of the world shall see and observe that there is a gracious invisible vigour and strength of heaven, which mightily supports the heart of the true Christian in those times of confusion and fear, when theirs shall be like the heart of a woman in her pangs, and fall asunder in their breasts, even like drops of water. That he is as bold as a lion, and immovable like Mount Zion in the day of distress and visitations of God, when they shall tremble at the shaking of a leaf, and call upon the mountains to cover them;

that he shall be able then to say with David, Psalm xlvi, 1, 2, "The Lord is my refuge and my strength, &c. Therefore will I not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." But they shall cry out of the bitterness of their spirits with the hypocrites, Isa. xxxiii, 14, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" God is much honoured, and his truth glorified, when it appears in the face of men that a poor neglected Christian (or, in the world's language, a precise fool) is able by the power of grace and influence of his favour to affront and outface all the frowns and malignant aspects of the proud giants of the world; and he is the Lord's noblest champion, and a professor of the truest and heavenliest dye, that holds out in the wetting, and shrinks not in the day of adversity. Chrysostom speaks to the people of Antioch like himself, a man of an invincible spirit, against the tyrannies of his times: "In this," he says, "should a gracious differ from a graceless man, that he should bear his cross courageously, and as it were with the wings of faith outsoar the height of all human miseries. He should be like a rock, being incorporated into Jesus Christ, impregnable and unshaken with the most furious incursions of the waves and storms of worldly troubles, pressures, and persecutions;" and, blessed be God, that even here upon earth, in this vale of tears, there is such a visible and vast difference between a wicked and godly man. The one is like the raging sea that cannot rest: the other stands fast like a rock which shall never be removed. An unregenerate heart is ever restless; commonly in these three regards at the least: 1. By reason of an endless and insatiable appetite after pleasures, riches, honours, revenge, or what other darling delight it hath singled out and made special choice of, to follow and feed upon with greatest contentment and sensual sweetness. God hath justly put that property, or rather poison, into all earthly things doated upon and desired immoderately, that they shall plague the heart which so pursues them, by filling it still with a furious and fresh supply of more greediness, jealousies, and many miserable discontentments, so that they become unto it as drink unto a man in a dropsy or burning fever, serve only to inflame it with new heat and fiery additions of insatiable thirst and inordinate longings. 2. Because of the many secret grumblings and stinging reclamations of a galled conscience against its present guilty courses and forbidden pleasures. 3. In respect of a continual ebullition, as it were, of confused and contrary lusts out of the poisoned

fountain of original corruption, which fill it with many distractions and tumultuations of hell. But now, if besides this inward boiling it be also tossed with outward troubles, what a miserable creature is a carnal man? Even as the sea, if besides its internal agitations by the restless motions of estuation, dissension, revolution, and reflection, it be also outwardly troubled with storms and tempestuous winds, how rageful and roaring will it be? But the other is like a strong immovable mountain that stands impregnable against the rage of wind and weather; and all the cruel incursions and ungodly oppositions made against it, either by men or devils, are but like so many proud and swelling waves which dash themselves against a mighty rock, — the more boisterously they beat against it, the more are they broken and turned into a vain foam and froth. Come what will, his heart is still in his breast, and his resolution as high as heaven.

Pestilent then is that principle of Machiavel (one not to be named but by way of detestation), and savours rankly of cursed atheism, whereby he teaches in sense and sum; that “heathenish religion did inspire her worthies of old with invincible and victorious spirits; but Christian religion begets effeminacy, dejections, and fears.” He speaks to this purpose, which to me seems strange, that such a profound professor of the depths, or rather devilishness of policy, should doat so sottishly:—and yet it is no such strange thing, for many times we may observe, that deepest policy, by the curse of God upon it for opposition to goodness, turns into extremest folly: and all counsels and politic constitutions against Christ are but the brainless infatuations of Ahithophel.

For that which he holds is strongly contradictory both to common sense and a thousand experiences to the contrary. For the first, and in a word, let that great master of mischief and of most abhorred atheistical principles of state tell me, whether a real assurance of a crown of life and endless joys in another world be not more powerful to raise a man's spirit to the highest pitch of undaunted nobleness of spirit and unconquerable resolution, than a vain breath of immortal fame among miserable men after this life? and in this lies the sinew of his proof. For the second, let the acts of the ancient Jews be impartially weighed, from whose magnanimity in causes of most extreme hazard those strange and unwonted resolutions have grown, which for all circumstances, says a great divine, no people under the roof of heaven did ever hitherto match: and that which did always animate them was their mere religion. Let the chronicles

also of later times be searched, and we shall find from time to time many renowned worthies to have for ever ennobled the matchless and incomparable courage of Christianity with inimitable impressions of valour and visible transcendancy, above all human boldness and affected audacities of the most valiant pagans. To begin with great Constantine, the first mighty commander of a Christian army, with what victorious glory did he confound and cut off many potent heads of Paganism! Thrice was the whole world most famously fought for; between Alexander and Xerxes; Cesar and Pompey; Constantine and Licinius. This last was most illustrious, wherein Constantine the Great did mightily conquer and triumphantly carry all before him; the herical and royal spirit of Christianity trampling victoriously upon the desperate rage of the most furious fool-hardy pagan tyrants.

I might here pass on to Theodosius and his miraculous conquests, and so on; but the digression would be unseasonable; therefore I leave you for the prosecution of this point to Anti-Machiavel. Even in later times, wofully plagued under the reign of Antichrist with a vast degeneration from primitive purity and power, the Christian religion, though poisoned with popish superstition, yet did so far inspire its warlike professors with extraordinary spirits, that in point of manhood they did wonders, to the astonishment of the whole world and all succeeding ages. Godfrey of Bulloigne, that famous warrior, with his followers, conquered in less than four years all the goodliest provinces of Asia, and drove out the Turks. In that dreadful and cruel conflict in Solomon's temple, as himself reports, in a letter to Bohemund king of Antioch, their men, "by the great slaughter of the enemy, stood in blood above the ancles." At that terrible and bloody battle at Ascalon, it is credibly reported, they slew a hundred thousand infidels, &c.

The valour and victories of Huniades, whose mighty spirit and incredible courage have no parallel in any preceding story, were so great, and did like a violent tempest and impetuous torrent so batter and beat down the enemies of Christ, that he was rightly reputed "the bulwark of Europe and thundering terror of the Turks," amongst whom his name became so dreadful, it is said they used the same to frighten their crying children withal. He fought five times with the Turks upon one day, and five times foiled and put them to flight with the loss of three thousand. He killed that valiant viceroy of Asia, Mesites Bassa, with his son and twenty thousand Turks; at that famous battle of Vas-

cape, wherein he got the greatest victory that ever any Christian prince before that time obtained against the Turkish kings, with fifteen thousand soldiers he overthrew Abedin Bassa, sent against him most ragingly by reason of a late shameful loss, according to Amurath's instructions, by "the slaughter of the Hungarians to sacrifice unto the manes of their dead friends and companions," with an army of fourscore thousand fighting men.

Scanderbeg also was such a mirror of manhood, and so terrible to the Turks, that nine years after his death, passing through Lyssa where his body lay buried, "they dug up his bones with great devotion, reckoning it some part of their happiness if they might but see or touch the same; and such as could get any part thereof, were it never so little, caused the same to be set, some in silver, some in gold, to hang about their necks or wear upon their bodies," thinking the very dead bones of that late invincible champion would animate their spirits with strange and extraordinary elevation and vigour. Besides an admirable variety of other rare exploits, at one time with the loss of sixty Christians he slew Amesa, with thirty, as some say, but at least twenty thousand Turks: he killed with his own hand above two thousand enemies. When he entered into fight, the spirit of valour did so work within him, and the fierceness of his courage so boiled in his breast, that it was wont to make blood burst out at his lips, and did so steel his arm that he cut many of his enemies asunder in the midst.

But take notice, by the way, as the profession of the Christian religion inspired these renowned worthies with a matchless height of courage and might of spirit, so the mixture with popish idolatry did then, and doth to this day unhappily hinder all thorough success and constant prevailing against that most mighty blood-thirsty Turkish tyrant, the terror of Christendom; who, drunk with the wine of perpetual felicity, holds all the rest of the world in scorn, and is the greatest and most cruel scourge of it that ever the earth bore. And besides that the idolatry of the Romish church most principally and with special curse blasts and brings to nought all undertakings of the Christian world against that wicked empire, the practice also of some pestilent principles, proper to that man of sin, hath plagued the most hopeful enterprises in this kind. For instance, the king of Hungary, by the help of Huniades was in a fair course and forwardness to have tamed and taken down, nay to have for ever crushed and confounded the insolency and usurpation of that raging Nimrod; but then comes in the pope with a vile trick, and utterly dashes and undoes

all. For he out of his Luciferian pride, by the power, or rather poison of that antichristian cut-throat position, "Of keeping no oath nor faith with infidels and heretics," unhappily undertook to absolve Uladislaus the king, and the rest whom it did concern, from that solemn oath for confirmation of a concluded peace taken of him upon the holy evangelists, and of Amurath by his ambassadors upon their Turkish Koran. Whereupon they resolutely break the league, raise a great army presently, and against their oath and promise set upon the Turk with perjury and perfidiousness, accompanied with God's curse, exposed the Christian party to a most horrible overthrow in the bloody battle of Varna, and cast upon the profession of Christ such an aspersion and shame, that not all the blood of that succession of popes which constitute antichrist could ever be able to expiate.

Look upon the story, and consider what a reproach and inexpiable stain doth rest upon the face of the Christian religion by this wicked stratagem of popish treachery, and that even upon record to all posterity; for Amurath, the Turkish emperor, in the heat of the fight plucked the writing out of his bosom wherein the late league was comprised, and holding it up in his hand with his eyes cast up to heaven, said thus, "Behold, thou crucified Christ, this is the league thy Christians in thy name made with me, which they have without cause violated. Now, if thou be a god, as they say thou art, and as we dream, revenge the wrong now done unto thy name and me, and show thy power upon thy perjured people, who in their deeds deny thee, their God."

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## CHAP. VI.

A second use of the former doctrine, for reproof to several sorts of people. The first whercof are the careless, with a first consideration to admonish them.

SINCE a stock of grace and the comforts of a sound conscience are only able to crush all crosses, outface all adversaries, take the sting out of all sorrows and sufferings, and serve in the evil day as a sovereign antidote to save the soul from sinking into the mouth of despair and extremest horror; then three sorts of people here offer themselves to be censured, and are to be frighted out of their security and cruel ease.

I. Those fools, sons and daughters of confusion and sloth,

who having a price in their hands to get wisdom, yet want hearts to lay it out for spiritual provision beforehand. They enjoy by God's rare and extraordinary indulgence and favour, life, strength, wit, health, and many other outward blessings, nay the most glorious day of a gracious visitation that did ever shine upon earth, many golden and goodly opportunities, many blessed seasons and sermons to enrich their souls abundantly with all heavenly treasures; and yet they are so far from spending their abilities, entertaining those merciful offers, and apprehending such happy advantages for their true and eternal good, that they most unworthily and unthankfully abuse, mispend, and misemploy all their means, time, and manifold mercies to serve their own turns, attain their sensual ends, and possess the present with all the carnal contentment they can possibly devise. These vassals of self-love, and slaves of lust, are so lulled upon the lap of pleasure by the syren songs of Satan's solicitors, and so drunk with worldly prosperity by swimming down the current of these corrupt times with full sail of sensuality and ease, that they fall asleep all the time of the happy harvest in this life for bringing grace into the soul under the sunshine of the gospel, wasting their precious time of gathering spiritual manna in grasping gold, clasping about the arm of flesh, screwing themselves by all ways and means into high rooms, "crowning themselves with rosebuds," and tumbling voluptuously in the pleasures and glory of this false and flattering world. But alas! poor souls, what will they do in the evil day? When after the hot gleam of earthly glory, and a short calm and cut over the sea of this world, they are come into the port of death, to which all winds drive them; and having there let fall that last anchor which can never be weighed again, shall be set in the land of darkness, the dust whereof is brimstone, and the rivers burning pitch, where they shall meet with whole armies of tempestuous and fiery plagues; and the envenomed arrows of God's unquenchable anger shall stick fast for ever in their soul and flesh; where they shall never more see the light nor the land of the living, but be drowned in everlasting perdition in the lake, even a boiling sea of fire and brimstone, where they can see no bank, nor feel no bottom. What will these "sleepers in harvest" say when they shall be awakened at that dreadful hour out of their golden dreams, and in their hands shall find nothing but the judgment of God growing upon their thoughts as an impetuous storm, death standing before them irresistible like an armed man, sin lying at the door like a bloodhound, and a guilty conscience gnawing at the heart like a vulture?

when they shall lie upon their last beds like "wild bulls in a net," as the prophet speaks, "full of the wrath of God; saying in the morning, Would God it were even; and at even, Would God it were morning, for the fear of their heart wherewith they shall fear, and for the sight of their eyes which they shall see?" I say, in what case will they be then? Then — but my words do fail me here, and so doth my imagination. For as none knows the sweetness of the spouse's kiss but the soul that receives it, so neither can any one conceive this horror, but he that suffers it. The Lord of heaven in mercy awaken them in the mean time with the piercing thunder of his sacred and saving word, that they may be happily frightened out of their amazed soul-murdering sloth, before they feel in hell those fearful things we so faithfully forewarn them of!

To rouse them out of this cruel carnal security, let them entertain in their most serious thoughts such considerations as these: Consider,

1. Why thou camest into this world. There is not so much as one age past since thou layest hid in the loathed state of being nothing. Above five thousand years were gone after the creation before there was any news of thee at all; and thou mightest never have been. God hath no need of thee: he gave thee a being only out of his own mere bounty. Infinite millions shall never be, which might have been as well as thou. God's omnipotency is equally able and active to have produced them as thee; and no parts of that vast abyss of *nothing* can possibly make any resistance to almightiness. And besides being so, that thou must needs have a being, there is not any creature that ever issued out of the hands of God, but thou mightest have been that, either for the kind or for the particular. All is one to him, to make an angel or an ant; to create the brightest cherub or the most contemptible fly; for in every creation no less than *omnipotency* must needs be the *efficient*, and no more than *nothing* is ever the *object*. Now what a miraculous mercy was this, that passing by such an unnumbered variety of incomparably inferior creatures, he should make thee an everlasting soul like an angel of God, capable of grace and immortality, of incorporation into Christ, and fruition of Jehovah himself, blessed for ever!

Nay, and yet further, though thou wast to have the being of a reasonable creature, yet there was not an hour from the first moment of time unto the world's end, but God might have allotted that to thee for thy coming into this world; and therefore thy time might have been within the compass of all those four thousand years, or thereabouts,

from the creation until the coming of Christ in the flesh, when all without the pale and partition wall were without the oracles and ordinances of God, and all ordinary means of salvation: or, since the gospel revealed under the reign of Antichrist, and then a thousand to one thou hadst been choked and for ever perished in the mists of his devilish doctrines. What a high honour was this, to have thy birth and abode here upon earth appointed from all eternity in the very best and most blessed time, upon the fairest day of peace, and, which is infinitely more, in the most glorious light of grace that ever shone from heaven upon the children of men!

And so of the place: be it so, that thou must needs be in this golden age of the gospel and gracious day; yet thy lot of living in the world at this time might have lighted (for any part of the earth might have received thee where thou couldst have set but thy two feet) amongst Turks, Pagans, Infidels; a whole world to Christendom. Or if thine appearing upon earth must necessarily be within the confines of Christendom, yet thou mightest have sprung up in the popish parts of it, or in the schismatical or persecuted places of the true church in it. It was a very singular favour that thou shouldst be born and bred and brought up in this little neglected nook of the world, yet very illustrious by the presence of Christ in a mighty ministry, where thou hast or mightest have enjoyed in many parts thereof the glorious gospel of our blessed God, and all saving truth, with much purity and power.

Now put all these together and tell me coolly, and after a sensible and serious pondering thereon, dost thou think that all this ado was about thee, all this honour done unto thee; and, when all is done, thou art to do nothing but seek thyself, serve thine own turn, and live sensually? Camest thou out of *nothing* into this world to do just nothing but eat and drink and sleep; to game, walk in the fashion, and play the good-fellow; to laugh and be merry; to grow rich and leave tokens of thy pleasure in every place? If any, after so much enlightening, be so prodigiously mad as to continue in such a conceit, I have nothing to say to him, but leave him as an everlasting madman abandoned to that folly which wants a name to express it. Turn then thy course for shame; nay, as thou hast any care to be saved and to see the glory of the New Jerusalem, as thou desirest to look the Lord Jesus in the face with comfort at that great day, as thou fearest to receive thy portion in hell fire with the devil and his angels, even most intolerable and bitter torments for ever and ever,—at least in this thy day, in this

heat and height of thy spiritual harvest, awake out of thy sensual sleep, come to thyself with the prodigal, strike upon thy thigh, and for the poor remainder of a few and evil days address thyself with resolution and constancy to pursue the one necessary thing, and to treasure up much heavenly strength and store against thine ending hour. Get thee under the most likely means and a quickening ministry, and there gather grace as greedily as the most griping usurer graspeth gold; contend with a holy ambition as earnestly for the keeping of God's favour, and a humble familiarity with his heavenly highness by keeping faith and a good conscience, as the proudest Haman for a high place and pleased face of an earthly prince. And why not infinitely more? This was the end for which thou wast sent into this world, this only is the way to endless bliss, and this alone will help us and hold out in the evil day.

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## CHAP. VII.

A second and third consideration for the admonition of those who are careless.

2. That upon the little inch of time in this life depends the length and breadth of all eternity in the world to come. As we behave ourselves here, we shall fare everlastingly hereafter. And therefore how ought we to ply this moment and prize that eternity? To decline all entanglement in those inordinate affections to the possessions and pleasures of the present, which hinder a fruitful improvement of it to the best advantage for the spiritual good of our souls, let us be moved with such reasons as these, which may be collected from the words of a worthy writer, which run thus with very little variation;—1. If we could afford ourselves but so much leisure as to consider that he which hath most in the world, hath in respect of the world nothing in it, and that he which hath the longest time lent him to live in it, hath yet no proportion at all therein; setting it either by that which is past when we were not, or by that time in which we shall abide for ever; I say, if both our proportion in the world, and our time in the world, differ not much from that which is nothing, it is not out of any excellency of understanding, saith he, but out of depth of folly, say I, that we so much prize the one, which hath in effect no being, and so much neglect the other, which hath no ending; coveting the mortal things of the world as

if our souls were therein immortal, and neglecting those things which are immortal, as if ourselves after the world were but mortal. 2. Let adversity seem what it will; to happy men ridiculous, who make themselves merry with other men's miseries, and to those under the cross, grievous; yet this is true, that for all that is past to the very instant the portions remaining are equal to either. For be it that we have lived many years, and, according to Solomon, in them all we have rejoiced; or be it that we have measured the same length of time, and therein have evermore sorrowed; yet looking back from our present being, we find both the one and the other, to wit, the joy and the wo, sailed out of sight, and death, which doth pursue us and hold us in chase from our infancy, hath gathered it. Whatsoever of our age is past, death holds it: so as whosoever he be to whom prosperity hath been a servant, and the time a friend, let him but take the account of his memory (for we have no other keeper of our pleasures past), and truly examine what it hath reserved either of beauty and youth or foregone delights, what it hath saved that it might last of his dearest affections, or of whatever else the jovial spring-time gave his thoughts contentment, then invaluable; and he shall find that all the art, which his elder years have, can draw no other vapour out of these dissolutions than heavy, secret, and sad sighs. He shall find nothing remaining but those sorrows which grow up after our fast-springing youth, overtake it when it is at a stand, and utterly overtop it when it begins to wither; insomuch as looking back from the present time and from our now being, the poor diseased and captive creature hath as little sense of all his former miseries and pains, as he that is most blessed in common opinion hath of his fore-past pleasures and delights; for whatsoever is cast behind us is just nothing. 3. To ponder also profitably upon eternity, that we "may apply our hearts unto wisdom," and so improve this short moment upon earth that it may go well with us for ever, let us take notice of and lay to heart this one quickening passage, confidently averred by a great writer. "If God," saith he, "should speak thus to a damned soul, 'Let the whole world be filled with sand from the earth to the empyrean heaven, and then let an angel come every thousandth year, and fetch only one grain from that mighty sandy mountain; when that immeasurable heap is so spent, and so many thousand years expired, I will deliver thee out of hell and those extremest horrors;' that most miserable forlorn wretch, notwithstanding that he were to lie through that inconceivable length of time in those intolerable tor-

ments, yet upon such a promise would infinitely rejoice, and deem himself not to be damned. But, alas! when all those years are gone, there are thousands upon thousands more to be endured, even through all eternity and beyond." How heavy and horrible is the weight of everlastingness in that burning lake, and those tormenting flames, when a damned man would think himself in heaven in the mean time if he might have but hope of coming out of them after so many infinite millions of years in them!

3. That it would not profit a man though he should gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul; and that a man can give nothing in exchange for his soul. Christ himself said so. Suppose thyself crowned with the confluence of all worldly felicity, to have purchased a monopoly of all pleasures, honours, and riches upon the whole earth, to be attended with all the pomp and state thy heart could desire; yet what were this momentary golden dream unto a real glorious eternity? How stinging would be the most exquisite delight, curiously extracted out of them all, accompanied with this one thought—the soul is lost everlastingly? All these painted vanities might seem perhaps a gaudy paradise to a spiritual fool, who hath his portion in this life; but what true pleasure can a man in his right wits, but morally enlightened no further than with philosophy, take in them, since, setting other respects aside, they are so fading and he so frail? For the first, God hath purposely put a transitory and mortal nature into all things here below; they spring, and flourish, and die. Even the greatest kingdoms and strongest monarchies that ever were, have had their infancy, youthful strength, man's state, old age, and at last the grave. See the end of the mightiest states that ever the sun saw shadowed by Nebuchadnezzar's great image (Dan. ii, 35). There was never empire upon earth, were it never so flourishing or great, was ever yet so assured, but that in revolution of time, after the manner of other worldly things, it hath as a sick body been subject to many innovations and changes, and at length come to nothing. Much more, then, the pride and pomp of all other inferior earthly glory hath fallen at last into the dust, and lies now buried in the grave of endless forgetfulness. For the second; imagine there were constancy and eternity in the forenamed earthly Babels, yet what man of sense would in the least prize them, since his life is but a bubble, and the very next hour or day to come he may utterly be cut off from them all for ever? "To-day he is set up, and to-morrow he shall not be found; for he is turned into dust and his purpose perisheth." Take them both together thus.

Set upon the head of the worthiest man that the earth bears, yet wanting grace in his soul, all the brightest imperial crowns that ever highest ambition aimed at or attained unto; put upon him all the royal robes that ever enclosed the body of the proudest Lucifer, fill him with all the wisdom and largest comprehensions which fall within the wide compass and capacity of any depths of policy or mysteries of state; furnish him to the full with the exactness and excellency of all natural, moral, and metaphysical learning; put him into the sole possession and command of this and the other golden world; in a word, crown him with the concurrence of all created earthly excellencies to the utmost and highest strain; and lay this man thus qualified and endowed upon the one scale of the balance, and vanity upon the other, and vanity will outweigh him quite. "Men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance they are altogether lighter than vanity" (Psalm lxii, 9). The rich fool in the gospel teacheth us that there is no man so assured of his honour, of his riches, health, or life, but that he may be deprived of either or all the very next night. Besides, by a thousand other causes, means, and ways, he may always be snatched away from the face of the earth in anger, for setting his heart and rest upon such rotten staves of reed, transitory shadows, and indeed that which is nothing. "Wilt thou cast thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches (conceive the same of all other worldly comforts) certainly make themselves wings: they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Prov. xxiii, 5). How truly then is that mad and miserable man a son of confusion, who spends the short span of his mortal life in wooing the world, who was never true to those that trusted in her, ever false-hearted to all her favourites, and at length most certainly undoes spiritually and everlastingly every wretch that is wedded unto her, who passeth through a few and evil days in this vale of tears, in following feathers, pursuing shadows, raising bubbles and balls like those blown up by boys in their pastimes, which ere they be tossed three times burst of themselves; I mean worldly vanities; but in the mean time suffers his immortal soul, more worth than many material worlds, and for which he can give nothing in exchange, to abide all naked, destitute, and empty, utterly unfurnished of that comfortable provision and gracious strength, which should support it in the day of sorrow, and leaves it at last to the tempestuous winter night of death, and all those desperate terrors that attend it like a scorched heath, without so much as any drop of comfort either from heaven or earth!

## CHAP. VIII.

The second sort of people to be reprov'd, which are sensualists. The first consideration to reform them.

II. A second sort, worse than the former, are such as are so far from treasuring up in this time of light and merciful visitation, soundness of knowledge, strength of faith, purity of heart, clearness of conscience, holiness of life, assurance of God's favour, contempt of the world, many sanctified sabbaths, fervent prayers, holy conferences, heavenly meditations, days of humiliation, righteous dealings with their brethren, compassionate contributions to the necessities of the saints, works of justice, mercy, and truth, a sincere respect to all God's commandments, a careful performance of all spiritual duties, a conscientious partaking of all God's ordinances, a seasonable exercise of every grace, hatred of all false ways, a hearty and invincible love unto God and all things that he loves, or that belong unto him, his word, sacraments, sabbaths, ministers, services, children, presence, corrections, comings, &c. which are the ordinary provisions of God's people against the evil day;— I say, they are so far from prizing and preparing such spiritual store, that they hoard up stings, scourges, and scorpions for their naked souls and guilty consciences against the day of the Lord's visitation; I mean lies, oaths, blasphemies, adulteries, whoredoms, self-pollutions, variety of strange fashions, gamings, revellings, drunken matches, good-fellow meetings, wanton dancings, usuries, falsehoods, hypocrisies; plurality of ill-gotten goods, benefices, offices, honours; filthy jests, much idle talk, slanderous tales, scoffs, railings, oppositions to the holy way, &c. and that with greediness and delight. For they cry one unto another out of a boisterous combination of good-fellowship, with much eagerness and roaring, "Come on, therefore, let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let no flower of the spring pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered. Let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness. Let us leave tokens of our pleasure in every place, for this is our portion, and our lot is this. Let us lie in wait for the righteous, because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings, &c." But alas! what will be the conclusion of all this, or rather the horrible confusion? Even all their jovial revellings, roarings, outrages, and sinful pleasures, which are so sweet in their mouths, and they swallow

down so insatiably, shall turn to gravel and the "gall of asps in their bowels," to fiery enraged scorpions in their consciences; where, lurking in the mean time in the mud of sensuality and lust, breed such a never-dying worm, which if God think fit to awake upon their last bed, is able to put them into hell upon earth, to damn them above ground, to gnaw upon their soul and flesh with that unheard-of horror which seized upon Spira's woful heart, who protested, being fully in his right mind, that he would rather be in Cain or Judas's place in hell than endure the present unspeakable torment of his afflicted spirit.

To beat them from this desperate course of greedy hoarding up such horrible things unto themselves against their ending hour, let them consider:—

1. Besides the eternity of joys for the one, and of torments to the other, hereafter, the vast and invaluable difference in the mean time, in respect of true sweetness and sound contentment, between the life of a saint and a sensualist: a puritan, as the world calls him, and a good-fellow, as he terms himself;—let us for the purpose peruse the different passages of one day, as Chrysystem excellently delineates them and represents to the life. "Let us produce two men," saith he, "the one drowned in carnal looseness, sensualities, and riotous excess; the other crucified and dead to such sinful courses and worldly delights. Let us go to their houses and behold their behaviour. We shall find the one reading the scriptures and other good books, taking time for holy duties and the service of God; sober, temperate, abstemious, diligent also in the necessary duties of his calling, having holy conference with God, discoursing of heavenly things, bearing himself more like an angel than a man. The other, jovial, a vassal of luxury and ease, swaggering up and down ale-houses, taverns, or other conventicles of good-fellowship, hunting after all the ways, means, and men to pass the time merrily, plying his pleasures with what variety he possibly can all the day long, railing and roaring as though he were enraged with a devil, though he be really dead while he is alive: which is accompanied with murmurings of the family, discontent of the wife, chiding of friends, laughing to scorn of enemies," &c. Whether of these courses now do you think were the more comfortable? I know full well the former would be cried down by the greatest part as too precise, and the latter would carry it by a world of men. But hear the puritan father's impartial holy censure, quite cross to the common conceit and humour of flesh and blood. It is excellent and emphatical, arguing his resolute abomination of the ways of

good-fellowship, and infinite love and admiration of the holy path. Having given to the good-fellow his heart's desire all the day long in all kinds of voluptuousness and delight, yet for all this, "Who is he," saith he, "that is in his right mind, that would not choose rather to die a thousand deaths, than spend one day so?" This peremptory passage would be held a strange paradox from the mouth of any modern minister, and so appears to the carnal apprehension of all those miserable men who are blindfolded and baffled by the devil to the eternal loss of their souls. But besides that it might be made good many other ways, it is more than manifest by comparing that three-fold sting that follows at the heels of every sinful delight, &c. (see my Book of Walking with God), with the comfortable contentment and secret sweetness which might and should attend all well-doing and every holy duty done with uprightness of heart. The very philosophers do tell us of a congratulation, a pleased contentedness and satisfaction in doing virtuously according to their moral rules. What true, solid, and singular comfort then, do you think, may be found in those godly actions which spring from faith, are guided by God's word, directed to his glory, and whose bewailed defects and failings are most certainly pardoned by the blood of his Son? Now what an extreme madness is this, for a man to sell his salvation for a life of pleasures; abhorring the ways of God's children as too precise and painful; whereas, besides hell for the one, and heaven for the other hereafter, in the mean time every day spent so sensually is a true purgatory, and every day passed in the contrary Christian course is an earthly paradise!

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## CHAP. IX.

The second and third consideration for the reformation of the sensualist.

2. LET them mark well the different ends of these men. Though the one now carries away the credit and current of the times, and with all bravery and triumph rolls himself in the pleasures, riches, and glory of the world, and the other is kept under hatches, neglected and contemptible to carnal eyes, trampled upon with the feet of pride and malice by the prouder Pharisees, and hunted with much cruelty and hate by men of this world: yet watch but a while, and you shall see the end of this upright man, whatsoever his sorrows and sufferings, troubles and temptations have been in this

life, to be most certainly peace at the last. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." (Psalm xxxvii, 37). He either passeth fairly and calmly through the port of death to the land of everlasting rest and rejoicing; or else, if a tempest of extraordinary temptation seize upon him in the haven, when he is ready to set foot into heaven, which is the lot of many of God's dearest ones, for ends seeming best to the ever-blessed Majesty, as perhaps to harden those about him that hate to be reformed; yet all the hurt he hath thereby is, besides serving God's secret holy pleasure, an addition to his happiness; for an immediate translation from the depth of temporary horror, as in the case of Mr. Peacock and Mrs. Brettergh, to the height of endless joy, makes even the joys of heaven something more joyful. He feels those never-ending pleasures at the first entrance more delicious and ravishing, by reason of the sudden change from that bitterness of spirit in the last combat to the excellency and eternity of heavenly bliss. His soul, in this case, after a short eclipse of spiritual darkness upon his bed of death, enters more lightsofely into the full sun of immortal glory. But what do you think shall be the end of the other man? He is in the mean time, it may be, "in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree," revelling in the abundance of all worldly jollity and wealth; wallowing dissolutely in the choicest delights and vainest pleasures; yet wait but a while, and you shall see him quickly "cut down like grass, and wither as the green herb." For God shall suddenly shoot at him with a swift arrow. It is already in the bow, even a bow of steel shall send forth an arrow that shall strike him through, and shall shine on his gall. His power and his pride shall be overthrown in the turn of a hand. All his imperious boisterousness shall melt away as a vain foam. "The eye which saw him shall see him no more; neither shall his place any more behold him." He must descend into the grave, naked and stripped of all power and pomp, all beauty and strength; a weaker and poorer worm than when he first came out of the womb. Hear further for this purpose, and fuller expression of my meaning in this point, how a worthy friend of mine, instancing in the exemplary and dreadful downfalls of Haman, Shebna, and others, labours to fright graceless great ones out of their luxury and pride, security and sinful pleasures, by consideration of their ends. "Oh then," saith he, "ye rich and great, ye proud and cruel, ambitious and honourable, take from their woful examples the true estimate of your riches and your power, your pleasure and your honour,

wherein ye trust, and whereof ye boast, but as Israel in Egypt, of a broken reed. Consider that like sins will have like ends ; that God is to-day, and yesterday, and the same for ever ; that the pride and cruelty, oppression and luxury of these times, have no greater privilege than those of the former. But when for a while you have domineered far and near, had what you would, and done what you pleased ; dispeopled parishes and plains for your orchards and walks ; pulled down many houses to set one up, from between whose battlements and turrets at the top you can see no end of your meadows, your fields, and your lands, the measuring whereof, as the poet speaks, would weary the very wings of the kite ; when the train of your dependents hath been too long for the street, and your bare respect hath shook the hat from the head, and bent the knee afar off ; when you have clapped whole manors on your backs, or turned them down your throats ; when you have scoured the plains with your horses, the fields and woods with your hounds, and the heaven with your hawks ; when with pheasants' tongues you have furnished whole feasts, and with the queen of Egypt drunk dissolved pearls, even fifty thousand pounds at a draught, and then laid your head in Dalilah's lap ; when, if it were possible, you have spent your whole lives in all that royal pomp and pleasure which that most magnificent king and queen did ( Esther i ) for a hundred and fourscore days ; in a word, when you wallowed in all delights and stood in pleasures up to the chin ; — then, even then, the pit is digged, and death, of whom you dream not, stands at the door. Where are you now, or what is to be done ? Come down, saith Death, from your pleasant prospects ; alight from your jades ; hood your kites ; couple up your curs ; bid adieu to pleasure ; out of your beds of lust ; come naked forth, and descend with me to the chambers of death. Make your beds in the dust, and lay down your cold carcasses among the stones of the pit at the roots of the rocks. And you, great and delicate dames, who are so wearied with pleasure that you cannot rise time enough to dress your heads and do all your tricks against dinner ; to wash your bodies with musk, and daub your faces with vermilion and chalk ; to make ready your pleasant baits to poison men's eyes and their souls ; you painted Jezebels, think you now you are fit company for men ? Nay, come headlong down to the dogs. If not suddenly so, yet dispatch, and put off your cauls, ear-rings, and round tires ; your chains, bracelets, and mufflers ; your rings, wimples, and crimping pins ; your hoods, veils, and changeable suits ; your glasses, fine linnen, with all your *mundus muliebris* ( Isa. iii, 16 ) ; and

put on stench instead of sweet smell; baldness instead of well-set hair; burning instead of beauty. Worms shall make their nests in your breasts, and shall eat out those wanton windows and messengers of lust; yea, rottenness and stench, slime and filth shall ascend and sit down in the very throne of beauty, and shall dwell between your eyebrows."

All this is very woful; and yet there is a thousand times worse. Besides all this, thou that now layest about thee for the world and wealth; for transitory pelf and rotten pleasures, that liest soaking in luxury and pride, and vanity, and all kind of voluptuousness, shalt most certainly very shortly lie upon thy bed of death, like "a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord;" either sealing thee up finally in the desperate senselessness of thine own dead heart, with the spirit of slumber for everlasting vengeance even at the door, or else exemplarily enraging the guilty conscience upon that thy last bed with hellish horror even beforehand. For ordinarily the more notorious servants of Satan and slaves of lust depart this life either like Nabal or Judas; though more by many thousands die like hard-hearted sots in security, than in despair of conscience. If it be so with thee, then, that thine heart when thou shalt have received the sentence of death against thyself die within thee, as Nabal's; "and most commonly," saith a worthy divine, "conscience in many is secure at the time of death, God in his justice so plaguing an affected security in life with an inflicted security at death;—I say, then, thou wilt become as a stone, most prodigiously blockish; as though there were no immortality of the soul; no loss of eternal bliss; no tribunal in heaven; no account to be made after this life; no burning in hell for ever. Which will make the never-dying fire more scorching, and the ever-living worm more stinging, by how much thou wast more senseless and fearless of that fiery lake into which thou wast ready to fall. "Death itself," saith the same man, "cannot awake some consciences; but no sooner come they into hell but conscience is awakened to the full, never to sleep more; and then she teareth with implacable fury, and teacheth forlorn wretches to know that forbearance was no payment." But if it please God to take the other course with thee, and to let loose the cord of thy conscience upon thy dying bed; thou wilt be strangled even with hellish horror upon earth, and damned above ground. That worm of hell which is a continual remorse and furious reflection of the soul upon its own wilful folly, whereby it hath lost everlasting joys, and must now lie in endless, easeless, and remediless torments, is set on work whilst

thou art yet alive, and with desperate rage and unspeakable anguish will feed upon thy soul and flesh ; the least twitch whereof, not all the pleasures of ten thousand worlds would ever be able to countervail. For as the peace of a good, so the pangs of a guilty conscience are unspeakable. So that at that time thou mayest justly take unto thyself Pashur's terrible name, *Magor Missabih*, Fear round about. Thou wilt be a terror to thyself and to all thy friends. And that which in this woful case will sting extremely, no friends, nor physic ; no gold, nor silver ; no height of place, nor favour of prince ; not the glory and pleasures of the whole world ; not the crowns and command of all earthly kingdoms, can possibly give any comfort, deliverance, or ease ! For when that time and terror hath overtaken thee, which is threatened Prov. i, 24—31 ; “ Because I have called and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord : they would none of my counsel : they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices : ” — I say, when this terrible time is come upon thee, then will the mighty Lord of heaven and earth come against thee “ as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of thy heart, and will devour thee like a lion ” (Hos. xiii, 8). “ He will come with fire and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire ” (Isa. lxvi, 15). All his terrors at that hour will fight against thee, and that unquenchable anger that burns to the very bottom of hell, and “ sets on fire the foundations of the mountains ” (Deut. xxxii, 22). The empoisoned arrows of his fiercest indignation shall be “ drunk with the blood ” of thy soul, and stick fast in it for ever. In a word, the fearful armies of all the plagues and curses, sorrows and insufferable pains denounced in God's book against final impenitents, shall with irresistible violence take hold upon thee at once, and pursue thee with that fury, which thou shalt never be able either to avoid or abide ; and “ Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God ? who can abide in his sight when he is angry ? who can deliver out of his hand ? ” What man or angel, what arm of flesh, or force of arms, what creature, or

created power, what cherub, or which of the seraphim is able to free a guilty conscience from the ever-gnawing worm, and an impenitent wretch from eternal flames? Oh! methinks a sensible forethought of these horrible things even at hand should make the hardest heart of the most abominable Belial to tremble at the root, and fall asunder in his breast like drops of water! To have his end in his eye, and seriously to remember the tribulation and anguish that shall shortly come upon his soul, the affliction, the wormwood, and the gall, should instantly frighten him out of his filthy, graceless, good-fellow courses.

3. Let them consider what horror it will be in evil times: I mean not only at death and the last day, which are the most terrible of all; but also in times of disgrace and contempt; of common fear and confusions of the state, of sickness, crosses, restraint, banishment, temptations, or any other days of sorrow. At such times to find, instead of peace, fiery scorpions in their consciences, innumerable sins graven there with an iron pen unrepented of! Hear how excellently Austin foretels and forewarns them, into what a forlorn and fearful state they shall most certainly fall, when, after a short gleam of worldly glory, they fall into tempestuous and troublesome times: "Of all afflictions incident to the soul of man, there is none more grievous and transcendent than to have the conscience enraged with the guilt of sin. If there be no wound there, if all be safe and sound within, if that bird of the bosom sing sweetly in a man's breast, it is no matter what miseries be abroad in the world, what storms or stirs be raised against him, what arm of flesh or rage of foes beset him round; for he in this case hath presently recourse unto his conscience, the safest sanctuary and paradise of sweetest repose; and finding that sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, filled with abundance of peace, and God himself there reconciled unto him in the face of Christ, he is courageously fearless of all, both mortal and immortal, adversaries and oppositions. 'Though the earth be removed and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea;' though all the creatures in the world should be turned into bears or devils about him, yet his conscience being comfortable he is undaunted and confident, and more than conqueror over the whole world and ten thousand hells. But on the other side, if by reason of the reign of sin, there be no rest there; if God be not there because of the abounding of iniquity, what shall a man do then? Whither shall he fly when the hand of God hath found him out, and the swift arrow of the Almighty sticks fast in his side? He will fly," saith that ancient father, "out of the

country into the city, out of the streets into his house, out of his house into his chamber, horror still following him closely. From his chamber whither will he go but into the inmost cabinet of his bosom, where his conscience dwelleth? and if he find there nothing but tumult and terror, but guiltiness, confusion, and cries of despair, which way will he then turn himself, or whither will he fly then? He must then either fly from himself, which is utterly impossible, or else abide that torment, which is beyond all compass of thought or expression of tongue." For "all the racks," saith another, "wheels, wild horses, hot pincers, scalding lead poured into the most tender and sensible parts of the body; yea, all the merciless, barbarous, and inhuman cruelties of the holy house, are but mere toys and May games, compared with the torments that an evil conscience will put a man to when it is awakened."

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## CHAP. X.

The third sort of people to be reprov'd, which are the Opposers of a powerful Ministry. Three reasons dissuading men from that sin.

3. A THIRD sort, the worst of all and the most pestilent, are those who do not only not labour in the time of harvest to treasure up comfortable provision against days of dread, and mispend the day of their visitation wickedly, but also, out of a transcendent strain of impiety, labour might and main to put out and utterly extinguish the heavenly sun that creates this blessed day, and makes the season of our spiritual harvest most glorious and incomparable; I mean to suppress and quench the saving light of a powerful ministry wheresoever planted and prevailing; under the sacred influence and sovereign heat whereof all God's hidden ones are wont to gather that heavenly stock of grace, comfort of godliness and good conscience, which is able to hold up their heads invincibly in heavy times. These are the vilest of men and of the most forlorn hope; for they are unhappily transported with extremest malice, and storm against the very means which should sanctify them, and men which should save them. They do not only make their own souls sure for damnation, but also hinder the power of the word all they can, lest others should be saved. Whatsoever thou dost, do not become one of this reprobate crew, who heartily desire that the sun of sincere preaching were quenched and put out, though it were with the blood of God's most faithful messengers, as did the men of Anathoth

in Jeremiah's time; Herodias in John Baptist's time; and that other Herodias, improperly called Eudoxia, in John Chrysostom's time; and many thousands even within the pale of the church at all times. Above all, I say, beware of that crying sin of persecuting the power of godliness, without which never any heart knew what true comfort meant; profession of the truth, without which Christ will not own us at the last day; conscientious ministers, under whose unceasing labours we gather our spiritual and heavenly store against evil times in this harvest of grace; and that either with thine heart, by hatred, malice, heart-burning; with thy tongue, by slanders, scoffs, rash censures; with thine hand, by supplanting, oppression, wrong; with thy purse, policy, power, misinforming, or any other way of vexing or violence. If thou wilt needs be wicked, be so more moderately. If there be no help, but thou wilt go to hell, post not so furiously. If nothing will work, but thou art wilfully bent on destruction, seek at least a more tolerable doom; for persecutors are transcendents in sin, and shall hereafter be paid home proportionably. Be none of them, for such reasons as these:—

(1.) All their malice and rancour, all their bitter words and scornful jests, all their bloody, merciless mischiefs and machinations against the power of preaching and God's people, strike immediately at the face of Jesus Christ. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts ix, 4.) and at the precious ball and apple of God's own eye. "For he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye" (Zech. ii, 8). God is our shield (Psalm lxxxiv, 11). Now the shield takes all the blows.

(2.) They are hunted many times with furies of conscience and extreme horror even in this life. Pashur put blessed Jeremiah in the stocks, but thereupon he had a new name given him, *Magor-missabib*, Fear round about. He became a terror to himself and to all his friends (Jer. xx, 2, 3, 4). Zedekiah smote faithful Micaiah upon the face; but afterwards, according to that prophetic communication, he was fain to run from chamber to chamber to hide himself (1 Kings xxii, 24, 25). John Baptist's head, which Herod cut off, sate in the eye of the tyrant's conscience with such grisly forms of guilt and blood, that when he heard of the great things done by Christ, he was perplexed, and no doubt afraid that John Baptist was risen from the dead to be revenged upon him. I have heard of a man, who for a time did furiously and desperately set himself against a minister of God; laboured by all means to disgrace and vex him, both by power and policy; by slan-

ders, oppressions, malice, contempt. But at length the word so got within him and hampered him, and the terrors of the Almighty took hold upon him with such irresistible rage, that he came trembling and quaking unto that man of God whom he had so wickedly wronged, and dared not stir a foot from him, for fear the devil should take him away alive, or the earth open her mouth and swallow him up quick, or some other strange remarkable judgment seize upon him suddenly, and brand him for a notorious beast and cursed castaway. So, or to such sense he spoke.

(3.) Many of them come to very horrible, exemplary, and woful ends. Pharaoh long since, by a dreadful confusion at the Red Sea, was, as it were, hanged up in chains, a spectacle of terror for persecutors to all posterity, Antiochus swelling with anger, and breathing out fire in his rage against the people of God, did proudly protest, that "he would come to Jerusalem, and make it a common burying place of the Jews. But the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, smote him with an incurable and invisible plague. For as soon as he had spoken these words, a pain of the bowels that was remediless came upon him, and sore torments of the inner parts. So that the worms rose up out of the body of this wicked man, and while he lived in sorrow and pain, his flesh fell away, and the filthiness of his smell was noisome to all his army" (2 Maccab. ix, 4). Herod in the height of his hatred against the gospel, and pride in imprisoning and persecuting the apostles, was eaten up of worms in a most fearful and prodigious manner (Acts xii, 23). Gardiner gaping for news of the dispatch of those two blessed martyrs of Jesus, Latimer and Ridley, at Oxford, deferred his dinner until three or four o'clock in the afternoon, delighting more in drinking the blood of the saints than in his ordinary food; but upon the return of his post, he fell merrily to his meat, and mark what followed: "The bloody tyrant," saith the story, "had not eaten a few bits, but the sudden stroke of God's terrible hand fell upon him in such a sort, as immediately he was taken from the table, and so brought to his bed, where he continued the space of fifteen days in such intolerable anguish and torments, that during the whole of these fifteen days he could not void in any manner the food that he received: whereby his body being miserably inflamed within (who had inflamed so many good martyrs before) was brought to a wretched end." For further enlargement of this point, see the Stories of the Primitive Church, Acts and Monuments, Theatre of God's Judgments.

## CHAP. XI.

Four other Reasons dissuading from the former Sin.

(4.) A cry far louder than the noise of many waters or voice of greatest thunder, knocks continually with strong importunity at God's just tribunal for a shower of "fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest" to be rained down upon their heads; I mean, a cry of blood, wrongs, disgraces, and slanders, wherewith they have loaded the saints of God. "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. vi, 10.)

(5.) They are the principal provokers of God's wrath against a nation. Their hateful heat, overflowing gall, and scornful carriage against God's people doth ripen apace his fiercest indignation, fill up full the vials of his vengeance, and draw down upon a kingdom a desperate and final ruin without all remedy. "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. xxxvi, 16).

(6.) Their spiteful spirits being once thoroughly set on heat with this fire of hell, and infernal rage against the grace of God and his people, commonly continue in flame and fury until their fearful and final confusion. And they being once fleshed, as it were, with the blood of the saints, at least by scoffs and slanders (for even lewd and lying tongues are keen razors and sharp swords, scourges and scorpions that fetch blood), they feed insatiably upon the sweetness of such supposed cursed revenge, until they be seized upon with their irrecoverable ruin, and fall amongst the inflamers of their malice, and arch persecutors of all professors, the fiends of hell. This is my meaning: this pestilent and crying sin of persecution is like the gulf of drunkenness, which Augustine compares to the pit of hell, into which when a man is once fallen there is no redemption or return. A persecutor is rarely or never reclaimed, either by miracle or ministry, mercy or misery. Fire from heaven falling upon the first captain and his fifty did not frighten the second captain and his fifty from pressing upon Elijah to apprehend him (2 Kings i, 10, 11). The soldiers who came to take Jesus, as soon as he said "I am he," were strangely upon the sudden struck down to the ground (John xviii, 6); and yet this miracle did never a whit mollify and abate the malice of the priests and pharisees against him. Not even

the ministry of Christ himself, though he spoke as never man spake; not that of Stephen, whose face appeared to his hearers as it had been the face of an angel; not that of the apostles freshly filled with the Holy Ghost from heaven, did at all tame or abate the rage of those who were possessed with this foul spirit of scornful contradiction; see Luke iv, 28, 29; and xvi, 14; Acts vii, 54; and ii, 13. Not all those horrible miraculous plagues of Egypt were able to quench Pharaoh's fury against the people of God, until he was choked in the Red Sea. No kindness from David, though extraordinary and matchless (1 Sam. xxiv, 11; and xxvi, 9), could turn Saul's heart from hunting him, "as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains." And no marvel though they be not moved by all or any of these means; for they scorn, persecute, and contemn the very means which should amend them, and the only men who should convert them. Whether of the two think you is likelier to recover? That man who being dangerously sick, yet entertains the physician kindly and takes patiently what is prescribed; or he, who having a potion presented unto him very efficacious for his recovery, throws the glass against the wall, spills that precious receipt, and drives the physician out at doors? Conceive proportionably between the persecutor and the less pestilent sinner, who meddles not maliciously against the ministry.

(7.) They are already in the pestilent path and very highway that leads to sin against the Holy Ghost; the horrible-ness and height of which dreadful villany may bring upon them even in this life impossibility of pardon (Matt. xii, 31, 32), and liability to that flaming judgment and fiery indignation, threatened Heb. x, 26, &c. And that they are growing towards this sin, if they be not quite gone that way, appears because they despitefully traduce, with much malice and mischief persecute the very works of grace and graces of God's spirit, shed into the hearts and shining in the lives of the children of light (1 John iii, 12; Psalm xxxviii, 20; 1 Pet. iv, 4). If a man would drink, swear, swagger, revel, and roar with them; if he durst be ignorant, a usurer, a sabbath-breaker, a worldling, a doater upon and defender of heathenish superstitious customs, a practiser or patron of old anniversary fooleries and rotten vanities; an encloser, gamester, good-fellow, &c., oh! then he should be the only man with them; entertained into their hearts and houses with all affectionate welcome of kindness and acceptation. But if the same man, by the mercies of God, once begin to break from them and out of the snares of the devil, to disrelish and detest his former ways of na-

ture and naughtiness; to love and reverence the most searching ministry; to read the scriptures and best books; to sanctify the Lord's day; to pray in his family; to renounce resolutely his running with them to the same excess of riot; to abandon and abominate their lewd and licentious courses; in a word, to turn Christian; oh! then he is an arrant puritan, a precisian, a humourist, a hypocrite, and all that is naught; even as bad as the false tongues of the devil's limbs can make a blessed man. He was a good-fellow, will they say, but he is now quite gone; a proper man, and of good parts, but his puritanism hath marred all. While Paul humoured the Pharisees in persecuting and plaguing the disciples of the Lord, he was a principal and much-honoured man amongst them; but when he turned on Christ's side, he was accounted a pestilent fellow, the very plague. So that it is plain and palpable, whatsoever may be pretended to the contrary, that those cursed Cains, implacable Doegs, and scoffing Ishmaels, that set themselves and spend their malice against the ministers and people of God, hate, slander, and persecute the very works of grace and graces of God's spirit in them. Even their zeal, holiness, hatred of sin, reformation, &c. are an eyesore and heart-sore to such hateful wretches and owls of the kingdom of darkness, who cannot endure any heavenly light.

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## CHAP. XII.

· Six other Reasons dissuading from the former Sin.

(8). As stigmatical rogues burnt in the hand, curtailed of their ears, branded in the forehead, are in the commonwealth; so are persecutors in the church. By mutual intelligence and information of God's people, or some more public lasting record and monument of the church, they have many times such a mark set upon them, that they carry it to their graves, yea to the judgment seat of God; that it may be known beforehand to that glorious tribunal and all the triumphant church, what beastly men, stinging scorpions, and pricking thorns they have been among God's children, and in the sides of the saints. Such a brand had Alexander the coppersmith set upon him by Paul (2 Tim. iv, 14, 15); and such a brand was set upon Diotrefes, that malicious prating companion, by St. John (3 John 9, 10). So are those blood-thirsty tigers, Gardiner, Bonner, and the rest of that cruel litter and persecuting pack branded,

that their names shall rot and their memories be hateful to the world's end. So too, many in these times, though they be very jolly fellows in their own conceit, adored as idols by their flattering dependents, applauded generally as the principal patrons of revelling and good fellowship, yet in the censure of the saints and by the doom of Divine wisdom, they are clearly known and justly reputed "enemies of all righteousness," and Satan's special agents to do mischief against the ministry.

(9.) It is to be feared they will find no mercy upon their beds of death, and in their last extremity, cry they never so loud, or promise they never so fair. God in his just indignation is wont to deal so with those who drink up iniquity like water, without all sense or fear of a glorious dreadful majesty above (Ezek. viii, 18); with those who refuse to stoop to God's ordinance and submit to the sceptre of Christ, when they are fairly invited by the ministry (Prov. i, 24, 28; Jer. vii, 13, 16; and xi, 11); with great ones who grind the faces of the poor (Micah iii, 4); with abusers of the riches of his goodness and long suffering (Rom. ii, 4, 5). How much more do you think shall impenitent persecutors be paid home in this kind? That great and cruel persecutor Antiochus (2 Maccab. ix, 13, 17), being seized upon by a horrible sickness, promiseth very gloriously upon that his last bed, besides many other strange reformations, even that he also would become a Jew himself, and go through all the world that was inhabited, and declare the power of God. But for all this, hear what the writer of that story saith of his spiritual state and of God's resolution towards him, verse 13: "This wicked person prayed also unto the Lord, who would now have no mercy on him."

(10.) All their spiteful speeches, scurrilous scoffs, pestilent lies, insolent insultings, &c. are as so many crowns of glory and joy unto the heads and hearts of all persecuted patient professors (1 Pet. iv, 14; Acts v, 41; Job xxxi, 36). So that they entirely miss the malicious mark their revengeful humours would gladly hit, the hurt and heart-breaking of those they so cruelly and cunningly hurt with much rancour and hate. And not only so, but most certainly hereafter, if they die not like drunken Nabal, and their hearts become as stones in their breasts, upon their beds of death they will all, though now passing from them with much bitterness of spirit and without all remorse, turn into so many envenomed stings and biting scorpions unto their own consciences, and gnaw upon their hearts with extremest horror.

(11.) The whole body of the militant church, join all as one man with strong concurrent importunity at the throne of grace, and with one heart and spirit constantly continue there such piercing prayers against all stubborn impenitent scorners, all incurable, implacable persecutors, as the people of God have been wont to pour out in such cases; as Lament. iii, 59, &c. "O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong: judge thou my cause. Thou hast seen all their vengeance and all their imaginations against me. Thou hast heard their reproach, O Lord, and all their imaginations against me; the lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day. Behold their sitting down, and their rising up: I am their music. Render unto them a recompence, O Lord, according to the work of their hands. Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them. Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the Lord." Now I would not be in that man's case, against whom God's people complain upon good ground at that just and highest tribunal one half hour, for the imperial crown and command of all the kingdoms of the earth; for who knows whether just at that time the righteous Lord for his children's sake and safety may rain upon such a man's head "snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest?"

(12.) And the prayers of the saints poured out in the bitterness of their souls, vexed continually with their malicious cruelties and cruel mockings, are means many times to bring persecutors to an untimely end, to knock them down before their time. Do not you think that the faithful Jews at Jerusalem, hearing of Antiochus marching towards them like an evening wolf to drink up their blood, had presently recourse unto God's righteous throne with strong cries to stay his rage? And do you not think that those very prayers drew down upon him that horrible and incurable plague, whereupon "he died a miserable death in a strange country in the mountains?" Herod, for any thing we know, might have lived many a fair day longer if he had dealt fairly with the apostles of Christ; but putting one to the sword, and another in prison, he put the church to their prayers (Acts xii, 2—5), which prayers (for "there is a certain omnipotency of prayer," as Luther was wont to say) did soon create those vermin that ate him up horribly in the height of his pride (ver. 23). The ecclesiastical story reports, that the loathsome and dreadful end of Arrius, that execrable enemy to Jesus Christ, was hastened by the prayers of the good and orthodox Bishop, Alexander, who wrestled with God in earnest deprecations against him all the night

before. Do you not think that Gardiner went sooner into his grave for his cruelty towards professors of the truth by their groans against him, and by the cry of the blood of that glorious pair of martyrs at Oxford which he so insatiably thirsted after? Let all those, then, that tread in these men's paths, tremble at their ends; and if no better motive will soften their malicious hearts, yet at least let their love unto the world, themselves, and sensual ways, take them off and restrain them from this persecuting rage, lest it set on work the prayers of God's people, and so they be taken away before their time, and cut off from a temporary supposed heaven of earthly pleasures, to a true everlasting hell of unspeakable torments, sooner than otherwise they should.

(13.) The hearts and tongues of all good men and friends to the gospel are filled with much glorious joy and heartiest songs of thanksgiving at the downfall of every raging incurable opposer, when the revenging hand of God hath at length to the singular advancement of the glory of his justice singled out and paid home remarkably any impenitent persecutor and implacable enemy. See for this purpose the song of Moses, *Exod. xv*; of Deborah, *Judges v*; the Jews feasting after the hanging of Haman, *Esther ix, 17*; *Psalm lii, 6, 9*; *lviii, 10*; and *lxxix, 13*; *1 Maccab. xiii, 51*. Only let the heart of God's child be watchful over itself with a godly jealousy in this point; that his rejoicing be, because God's justice is glorified, his church delivered, Satan's kingdom weakened, &c.; not only for his own ease and end, for any personal or particular bye-respect. Now it is a heavy case, a man in his short abode upon earth to behave himself so like a surly cur and incarnate devil, that all good men are and ought to be truly glad when he is gone.

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### CHAP. XIII.

- I. Who are meant by Persecutors. II. What is meant by Persecution.  
 III. An Objection against the Doctrine answered.

I. In this point I comprise and include all sorts of persecutors, of which some are professed and open, as Bonner and Gardiner, and many such morning wolves; some politic and reserved, who many times are the more pernicious. For of all manner of malice and ill-will, that is most execrable, deadly, and doth the most hurt, which like a serpent in the fair green grass lies lurking in the flatterings and fawnings

of a hypocritical countenance; which kisses with Judas and kills with Joab; entertains a man with outward forms of compliment and courtesy, but would, if it dare or might, stab him in at the fifth rib that he should never rise again: when a man's words to thy face are as soft as oil or butter, but his thoughts toward thee are composed all of blood and bitterness, of gall and gunpowder. Some are notorious villains, as many times in many places the most desperate blasphemers, stigmatical drunkards, unclean sensualists, cruel usurers, and fellows of such infamous rank, are as so many goads in the sides of God's servants, and the only men to pursue all advantages against the most faithful ministers. Some are of more sober carriage, fair conditions, and seeming devotion (Acts. xiii, 50). Some are the basest fellows, the most abject and contemptible vagabonds, and the very refuse of all the rogues in a country. This we may see by Job's complaint, chap. xxx, "But now," saith he, "they that are younger than I, have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock.—They were children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth. And now am I their song, yea, I am their byeword." And in David's Psalm xxxv, 15, "Yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me," &c., "and I was the song of the drunkards" (Psalm lxix, 12). And in the persecutors of Paul (Acts xvii, 5): "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort," &c. Some again are men of place and parts, as the same David complains in the same place: "They that sit in the gate speak against me;" that is, men in high rooms and of great authority.

II. And as all sorts of persecutors, so I comprehend all kinds of persecution. 1. By hand, as did Herod (Acts xii), Julian, Bonner, &c. 2. With tongue, by mocking (Galat. iv, 24, compared with Gen. xxi, 9; see also Psalm lxix, 20; Heb. xi, 36). By slandering, even in reporting true things maliciously to the prejudice of God's children (Psalm lii). By reproaching and reviling (Zeph. ii, 8). By insulting with insolent speeches (Ezek. xxvi, 2, and xxxvi, 2). 3. In heart; by hatred (Ezek. xxxv, 5); by rejoicing in the downfall or disgrace of the saints (Ezek. xxxv, 6). 4. In gesture (Ezek. xxv, 6, 7), "Because thou hast clapped thy hands, and stamped with the feet," &c. "Behold, therefore, I will stretch out mine hand upon thee," &c. Take heed of so much as looking sour upon or brow-beating a servant of Christ, lest thou smart for it. Look upon the quoted places, and you shall see offenders in any of these

kinds, plagued and justly rewarded as persecutors of God's people, and thus let such extremely wicked men be frightened from persecuting in any way those men or means which are appointed and sanctified to furnish us with spiritual store and strength against the days of evil.

III. *Obj.* But against that which hath been said on this point for the singularity and sovereignty of grace and good conscience to support the spirit of a man in evil times, to keep it calm in the most tempestuous assaults, and conquering over all comers, it may be objected, and some may thus cavil:—

Men who never were or ever did desire to be acquainted with God's grace or good men, express sometimes and represent to by-standers an invincible stoutness, much boldness and braveness of mind in times of greatest extremity, and under most exquisite tortures; and therefore it seems not to be peculiar to the saints, and the privilege of God's favourites alone to stand unshaken in stormy times, undaunted in distress, and comfortable amidst the most desperate confusions.

*Ans.* I answer: such confidence is only in the face, not in the heart; enforced, not kindly; affected, not effectual; not springing from the sole fountain of all sound and lasting comfort in human souls, sense of our reconciliation to God in Christ; but from some other odd accidental motives; from weak and unworthy grounds.

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## CHAP. XIV.

### Five false Grounds of confident enduring Misery.

1. IN some, from an ambitious desire of admiration and applause for extraordinary undauntedness of spirit and high resolution. It is reported of an Irish traitor, that lying in horrible anguish upon the wheel, an engine of cruellest torture, with his body bruised and his bones broken, he asked his friend standing by, whether he changed countenance at all, or no. Affecting more, as it seems, an opinion of prodigious manliness and unconquerableness in torment, than affected with the raging pains of a most terrible execution.

2. In others, from a strong stirring persuasion and consciousness of the honesty and honour of some civil cause for which they suffer. But fortitude in this case doth not arise from any inspired religious vigour or heavenly infusions, but from the severer instigations of natural conscience

and acquired manhood of a mere moral puritan. Many such moral martyrs have been found amongst the more generous and well-bred heathen. It is related of a brave and valiant captain, who had long manfully and with incredible courage withstood Dionysius the Elder, in defence of a city, that he sustained with strange patience and height of spirit the merciless fury of the tyrant and all his barbarous cruelties, most unworthy of him that suffered them, but most worthy him that inflicted the same. "First, the tyrant told him that the day before he had caused his son and all his kinsfolks to be drowned. To whom the captain stoutly facing him answered nothing, but that they were more happy than himself by the space of one day. Afterward he caused him to be stripped, and by his executioners to be taken and dragged through the city most ignominiously, cruelly whipping him, and charging him besides with outrageous and contumelious speeches. Notwithstanding all which, as one no whit dismayed, he ever showed a constant and resolute heart: and with a cheerful and bold countenance went on, still loudly recounting the honourable and glorious cause of his death, which was, that he would never consent to yield his country into the hands of a cruel tyrant." With such stoutness did even mere moral virtue steel the ancient Roman spirits, that in worthy defence of their liberty, for preservation of their country, or other such noble ends, they indifferently contemned gold, silver, death, torture, and whatsoever else miserable worldlings hold either dear or dismal.

3. In some, from an extreme hardness of heart, which makes them senseless and fearless of shame, misery, or any terrible thing. This we may sometimes observe in notorious malefactors. A long, rebellious, and remorseless continuance and custom in sin, raging infections from their roaring companions, a furious pursuit of outrages and blood; Satan's hot iron searing their consciences, and God's just curse upon their fearful and forlorn courses; so fill them with fool-hardiness, and with such a deadly disposition, that they are desperately hardened against all affronts and disasters; so that though such savage-minded and marble-hearted men be to pass through the streets as spectacles of abhorredness and scorn, as hateful monsters and the reproach of mankind; to be thrown into a dungeon of darkness and discomfort, and there to be laden with cold irons, coldness, and want; from thence to be hurried to that loathed place of execution, and there to die a dog's death; and finally to fall immediately and irrecoverably into a lake of fire; yet, I say, for all this, out of a desperate hard

heartedness they seem still to be in heart, and to represent to the beholders a great deal of undauntedness and neglect of danger in their carriage and countenances. Oh the prodigious rock into which the stone in a graceless heart may grow, both in respect of desperateness in sinning and senselessness in suffering!

4. In others, from an enraged thirst after human praise and immortal fame, as it is called; which may be so prevalent in them, and transport them with such a vain-glorious ambition this way, that it may carry them with much seeming insensibility, affected patience, and artificial courage, through the terrors and tortures of a very violent and martyr-like death. Hear what Austin saith to this point; "Think ye there never were any catholics, or that now there may not be some, that would suffer only for the praise of men? If there were not such kind of men, the apostle would not have said, 'Though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, I am nothing.' He did know right well that there might be some which would do it out of vain-glory and self-love, not for Divine love and the glory of God." Oh the bottomless depths of hellish hypocrisy, which lie hid in our corrupt hearts! Oh the blind and perverse thoughts of foolish men! Oh the murderous malice of that old red dragon, which exerciseth such horrible cruelty both upon our bodies and souls!

5. In some, from false grounds of a supposed good estate to God-ward, from an unsound persuasion of their present spiritual well-being and future welfare. Such Pharisees, foolish virgins, and formal professors are to be found in all ages of the church, especially in the fairest and most flourishing days thereof, and when the gospel hath the freest passage, who thus many times in the greatest of all earthly extremities, even upon their beds of death, represent to all about them, from a groundless presumption of being reconciled unto God, a great deal of confidence, resolution, and many glorious expectations. Upon a partial survey and perusal of their time past, not stained perhaps with any great enormities, notoriousness, or infamous sin; out of a vain-glorious consciousness to themselves of their many good parts, general graces, good deeds and plausibleness with the most, by reason of a former obstinate distaste and prejudice against sincerity and the power of godliness, as though it were unnecessary singularity and peevishness; and it may be confirmed also unhappily in their spiritual self-cozenage, by the unskilful and unseasonable palliations, I mean misapplications of some abused promises unto their unhumiliated souls from some daubing ministers, a generation of vilest

men, plausible idiots in the mystery of Christ, and merciful assassins of many miserable deluded souls, to whom they promise life and peace when there is no peace, but terrible things even at hand (Ezek. iii, 10), tumbling of "garments in blood" (Isa. ix, 5), noise of damned souls and tormenting in hell for ever;—I say from such false and failing grounds as these they many times in that last extremity (the Lord not revealing unto them the unsoundness of their spiritual estate and rottenness of their hopes) demean themselves cheerfully and comfortably, as though they were presently to set foot into heaven, and to lay hold upon eternal life; but God knows without any just cause or true ground. For immediately upon the departure of the soul from the body shall they hear that woful doom from Christ's own mouth, as himself hath told us beforehand, "Depart from me, I never knew you" (Matt. vii, 23). Such men as these, having been formerly acquainted with and exercised in the outward forms and ceremonies of religion, are wont at such times to entertain their visitants and bystanders with many goodly speeches and scripture phrases, representing their contempt of the world, willingness to die, readiness to forgive all the world, hope to be saved, desire to be dissolved and be in heaven, &c. They may cry aloud with much formal confidence, "Lord, Lord, open to us; mercy, mercy, in the name of Christ; Lord Jesus, receive our spirits," &c.; which last ejaculations, did they spring from a truly broken, penitent, and heavenly heart, and were they the periods and conclusions of a well-spent life, might blessedly break open with irresistible power the gates of heaven, unlock the rich treasures of immortality, and fill the departing soul with the shining beams of God's glorious presence: but unto them such goodly and glorious speeches are but as so many catchings and scabblings of a man overhead in water: he struggles and strives for hold to save himself, but he grasps nothing but water; it is still water which he catches, and therefore sinks and drowns.

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#### CHAP. XV.

A sixth false Ground of confident enduring Miseries. A conclusion of the first Doctrine.

6. IN others from a misguided headstrong zeal in will-worship, an impotent peremptory conceit that they suffer in the cause of God, and for the glory of religion. This un-

hallowed fury possessed many heretics of old. Upon this false ground the Donatists in the fourth century after Christ offered themselves willingly, and suffered death most courageously. And so did the Euphemites, who for the multitude of their supposed martyrs, would needs be called Martyrians. We also learn from history that Turks, Tartars, and Moors both fight and die most bravely for the blasphemous opinions of Mahomet; and that the Assassins\*, a company of blood-thirsty villains and desperate cut-throats, who would without all scruple or fear undertake to dispatch any man whom their general commanded them to murder, died oftentimes with great constancy and undismayedness; and this they accounted a special point of religion. But especially at this day the Popish pseudo-martyrs (indeed true traitors) are stark mad with this superstitious rage. First, they drink full deep of the golden cup of abominable "fornication in the hand of the great whore;" immediately whereupon they grow into an insatiable and outrageous thirst after the blood of souls, poisoning them with the doctrine of devils, and also after the blood of whomsoever withstands their accursed superstitions, even though they wear imperial crowns upon their heads; by plotting and practising treasons, patricides, assassinations, poisonings, ruins of whole nations, barbarous massacres, blowing up of parliaments, and a world of mischiefs, which cast an inexpiable stain and obloquy upon the innocency of the Christian religion. At last they come to Tyburn, or some other place of just execution, and then they will needs persuade the world that they are going towards heaven to receive a crown of martyrdom. They seem there already to triumph extraordinarily, and to contemn tortures. With an affected bravery they trample upon the tribunals of justice; kiss the instruments of death in sign of happiness at hand; and throw many resolute and rejoicing speeches amongst the people, as though they had one foot in heaven already: when, alas! poor blind, misguided souls, while they thus wilfully and desperately abandon their lives upon a groundless and graceless conceit that they shall become crowned martyrs, they are like a man, who lying asleep upon a high and steep rock, dreams that he is created a king, guarded with a goodly train of ancient nobles, furnished with many princely houses and stately palaces, enriched with the revenues, majesty, and magnificence of a mighty kingdom, attended with all the pleasures his heart could desire; but starting up suddenly and leaping for joy, falls headlong and

\* A sect of Mahometan enthusiasts.

irrecoverably into the raging sea ; and so in lieu of that imaginary happiness he vainly grasped in a dream, he destroys himself and loses that little real comfort he had in this miserable life. That pair of incarnate devils, the English Fawkes and French Ravillac ; the one, after that in the pope's cause he had embued his hands in the royal blood of a mighty king and the greatest warrior upon earth ; the other having done his utmost to blow up at once the glory, power, wisdom, the religion, peace, and prosperity of the most renowned state under the heavens, were both prodigiously bold, confident, peremptory. But was this courage think you inspired into them by the "lion of the tribe of Judah," already triumphant in the heavens, or by that roaring dragon of the bottomless pit ? A man of an understanding, impartial, discerning spirit would scarcely wish a clearer demonstration of the truth and orthodoxy of our religion than to mark the different ends of our blessed martyrs in Queen Mary's time, and those popish traitors which are sometimes executed among us. They both ordinarily at their end express a great deal of confidence. But in the pseudo-catholic antichristian martyrs, it is so enforced, artificial, ambitious, affected ; their speeches so cunning, and composed on purpose to seduce the simple ; their last behaviour so plotted beforehand and formally acted ; their prayers so unhearty, plodding, and slight ; their whole carriage so unspiritual and unlike the saints of God ; discovering neither former acquaintances with the mysteries of true sanctification, nor those present feeling elevations of spirit which are wont to fill the souls which are ready to enter into the joys of heaven, that to a spiritual eye, to a man versed in the purity and power of godliness, it is most clear that their comfort in such cases is of no higher strain nor stronger temper than the moral resolution of a heathen, and headstrong conceit of heresy can represent or reach unto. It is otherwise with the true martyrs of Jesus, slain most cruelly by that "great whore, the mother of harlots," drunken with a world of innocent blood as with sweet wine ; as we may see and feel in that glorious martyrology of our saints, in the merciless times of Queen Mary. The constant profession and power of our most true and ever-blessed religion did create such a holy and humble majesty in their carriages, so much of heaven and sober undauntedness in their countenances, such joyful springings and spiritual ravishments in their hearts ; such grace and powerful piercings in their speeches ; such zeal and hearty meltings in their prayers ; such triumphant and heavenly exultations amid the flames, that it was more than manifest

both to heaven and earth, to men and angels, that their cause was the cause of God ; their murderer, that man of sin ; their blood, the seed of the church ; their souls, the jewels of heaven ; and their present passage, the right and ready way to that unfading and most glorious crown of martyrdom. That which in fiction was fathered upon Father Campion was most true of every one of our true martyrs :

That every one might say, with heavy heart that stood :

Here speaks a saint, here dies a lamb, here flows the guiltless blood.

Thus you have heard upon what weak props and sandy foundations that confidence stands and is built which carnal men seem to lay hold upon with great bravery in times of trouble and distress. But the comfort which sweetly springs from that spirit I speak of, supported out of special favour and interest by the hand of God all-sufficient, and the unconquerable calmness of a good conscience, is grounded upon a rock, upon which though the rain descends, the floods come, the winds blow, the tempests beat, yet it stands like Mount Zion, sure, sober, strong, lasting, impregnable. Nay, it is of that heavenly metal and divine temper, that it ordinarily gathers vigour and power from the world's rage ; and grows in strength and resolution together with the increase of all unjust oppositions. Persecutions and resistance serve as a provocation and seasoning to its sweetness. It is not enforced, formal, artificial, affected, furious, desperate, misgrounded, ambitious, upon a humour in the face only ; only in hot blood, out of a vain-glorious pang, &c. Such may be found in aliens and resolute reprobates. It were nothing worthy if strangers might meddle with it ; if men or devils, or the whole world could take it from us ; if it were sustained only by any created power or arm of flesh. This pearl that I praise, and persuade unto, is of a higher price and more transcendent power than any unregenerate man can possibly compass or comprehend. It hath for its seat, a sanctified soul ; for the fountain of its refreshing, the Spirit of all comfort ; for its foundation, the favour of God ; for its warrant, the promises of the " Amen, the faithful and true witness ;" for its object, an immortal crown ; for its continuance, the prayers of all the saints ; for its companions, inward peace, invincible courage, a holy security of mind ; for its end and perfection, " fulness of joy and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore ;" in a word, this courageous comfort and true nobleness of spirit, which dwells in the heart of the true-hearted Christian, doth differ as much from, and as far surpasses all the groundless con-

fidences of every carnal man or religious counterfeit, as the real possession of gold surpasses an imaginary dream of gold ; as the true natural lively grape which glads the heart, excels a painted juiceless grape, which only feeds the eye ; or as a strong and mighty oak rooted deeply in the earth, which no storm or tempest can displant or overthrow, is superior to a stake in a dead hedge, or staff stuck lightly into the ground, which every hand may snatch away, or blast of wind supplant and overthrow.

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## SECT. I. PART II.

### CHAP. I.

The doctrine of the Intolerableness of a Wounded Conscience proved.

Secondly, the trouble of a wounded conscience is farther amplified by its attribute, intolerableness. "But a wounded spirit who can bear?" Whence note,

*Doctr.* That the torture of a troubled conscience is intolerable.

*Reas. 1.* In all other afflictions, only the arm of flesh is our adversary : we contend but with creatures at most ; we have to do but with man, or at worst with devils ; but in this transcendent misery, we conflict immediately with God himself. Frail man with Almighty God : sinful man with that most holy God, whose eyes are purer than to behold evil, and who cannot look upon iniquity (Habak. i, 13). "Who, then, can stand before his indignation ? who can abide in the fierceness of his anger, when his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him ?" (Nahum i, 6.) When he comes against a man "as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, to rend the very caul of his heart, and to devour him like a lion" (Hos. xiii, 8). No more than the driest stubble can resist the most fiery flame ; the ripe corn, the mower's sharpest scythe ; or a garment, the moth : no more, nay infinitely less, can any power of man or angel withstand the mighty Lord of heaven and earth when he is angry for sin. "When thou" (saith David, Psalm xxxix, 11) "with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." Alas ! when a poor, polluted wretch, upon some special illumination by the word, or extraordinary stroke from the rod, doth once begin to behold God's frowning face against him in the pure glass of his most holy law, and to feel Divine justice, by an invisible hand, taking secret ven-

geance upon his conscience, his heavy heart immediately melts away in his breast and becomes as water. He faints and fails, both in the strength of his body and stoutness of his mind. His bones, the pillars and master-timbers of his earthly tabernacle, are presently broken in pieces and turned into rottenness. His spirit, the eye and excellency of his soul, which should enlighten and make lightsome the whole man, is quite put out and utterly overwhelmed with excess of horror and flashes of despair. Oh! this is it which would not only crush the courage of the stoutest son of Adam that ever breathed upon earth, but even break the back of the most glorious angel that ever shone in heaven, should he lift up but one rebellious thought against his Creator! This alone is able to make the tallest cedar in Lebanon, the strongest oak in Bashan (I mean the highest look and the proudest heart), the most boisterous Nimrod, or swaggering Belshazzar, to bow and bend, to stoop and tremble, as the leaves of the forest that are shaken with the wind.

2. In all other adversities a man is still a friend unto himself, favours himself, and reaches out his best considerations to bring in comfort to his heavy heart. But in this he is a scourge to himself; at war with himself; an enemy to himself. He doth greedily and industriously fetch in as much matter as he can possibly, both imaginary and true, to enlarge the rent and aggravate his horror. He gazes willingly in that false glass which Satan is wont in such cases to set before him, wherein by his hellish malice he makes an infinite addition both to the already unnumbered multitude and to the too true heinousness of his sins, and would fain, if he will be led by his lying cruelty, misrepresent to his affrighted imagination every gnat as a camel, every moat as a mole hill, every mole hill as a mountain; every lustful thought as the most unclean act, every idle word as a desperate blasphemy, every angry look as an actual murder, every intemperate passion as an inexpiable provocation, every distraction in holy duties as an absolute rebellion, every transgression against light of conscience as a sin against the Holy Ghost. Nay, in this amazedness of spirit and disposition to despair he is apt, even of his own accord, and with great eagerness, to arm every several sin as it comes into his mind with a particular sting, that it may strike deep enough and stick fast enough in his already grieved soul. He employs and improves the excellency and utmost of his learning, understanding, wit, memory, to argue with all subtlety, with much sophistry, against the pardonableness of his sins and possibility of salvation. He wounds even his wounds with a conceit that they they are incurable,

and vexes his very vexations with refusing to be comforted. Not only crosses, afflictions, temptations, and all matter of discontentment; but even the most desirable things also in this life, and those which minister most outward comfort; wife, children, friends; gold, goods, great men's favours; preferments, honours, offices, even pleasures themselves, every thing: whatsoever is within him, or without him, or about him; whatsoever he thinks upon, remembers, hears, sees, turn all to his torment. No marvel, then, though the terror of a wounded conscience be so intolerable.

3. As the exultations of the soul and spiritual refreshments do incomparably surpass both in excellency of object and sweetness of apprehension all pleasures of sense and bodily delights, so afflictions of the soul and spiritual pangs do infinitely exceed both in bitterness of sense and intenseness of sorrow the most exquisite tortures that can possibly be inflicted upon the body. For the soul is a spirit, very subtle, quick, active, stirring; all life, motion, sense, feeling, and therefore far more capable and apprehensive of all kinds of impressions, whether passions of pleasure or inflictions of pain.

4. This extremest of miseries, "a wounded spirit," is tempered with such strong and strange ingredients of extraordinary fears, that it makes a man a terror to himself and to all his friends (Jer. xx, 4); to flee when none pursues, at the sound of a shaken leaf (Prov. xxviii, 1; Levit. xxvi, 37); to tremble at his own shadow; to be in great fear where no fear is (Psalm liii, 5): Besides the insupportable burthen of too many true and causeful terrors, it fills his dark and dreadful fancy with a world of feigned horrors, ghastly apparitions, and imaginary hells, which notwithstanding have real stings, and impress true tortures upon his trembling and woful heart. It is poisoned with such restless anguish and desperate pain, that though life be most sweet and hell most horrible, yet it makes a man wilfully to abandon the one and willingly to embrace the other that he may be rid of its rage. Hence it was that Judas preferred a halter and hell before his present horror—that Spira said often (what heart quakes not to hear it?) that he envied Cain, Saul, and Judas; wishing rather any of their rooms in the dungeon of the damned than to have his poor heart so rent in pieces with such raging terrors and fiery desperations upon his bed of death. Whereupon at another time, being asked whether he feared more fearful torments after this life? "Yes," said he; "but I desire nothing more than to be in that place, where I shall expect no more." Expectation as it seems of future did infinitely aggravate and enrage his already intolerable torture.

5. The heathens, who had no fuller sight of the foulness of

sin, or more smarting sense of Divine vengeance for it than the light of natural conscience was able to afford and represent unto them; yet were wont in fiction to shadow out in some sort, and intimate unto us the insufferable extremities of a mind troubled in this kind, by hellish furies following malefactors with burning fire-brands and flames of torture. What understanding then is able to conceive, or tongue to report, in what case that sinful conscience must needs be, when it is once awakened, which besides the notions of natural light, hath also the full sun of God's sacred word, and that pure eye which is ten thousand times brighter than the sun, and cannot look upon iniquity, to irradiate and enrage it to the height of guiltiness and depth of horror? Both heart and tongue, man and angel, must let that alone for ever. For none can take the true estimate of this immeasurable spiritual misery, but he that can comprehend the length and breadth of that infinite irresistible wrath, which once implacably enkindled in the bosom of God, burns to the very bottom of hell, and there creates the extremity and endlessness of all those inexpressible torments and fiery plagues, which afflict the devils and damned souls in that horrible pit.

6. Not only the desperate cries of Cain, Judas, and many other such miserable men of forlorn hope, but also the woful complaints even of God's own dear children, discover the truth of this point, to wit, the terrors and intolerableness of a wounded conscience. Hear how ruefully three ancient worthies in their times wrestled with the wrath of God in this kind. "I reckoned till morning," saith Hezekiah, "that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones," (Isa. xxxviii, 13). Even as the weak and trembling limbs of some lesser neglected beast are crushed and torn in pieces by the irresistible paw of an unconquerable lion; so was his troubled soul terrified and broken with the anger of the Almighty. He could not speak for bitterness of grief and anguish of heart, "but chattered like a crane or a swallow, and mourned like a dove." "Thou writest bitter things against me," saith Job, "and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me, that he would let loose his hand and cut me off." Nay, yet worse: "Thou scarest me with dreams and terrifiest me through visions. So that my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than my life" (Job xiii, 26; vi, 4, 8, 9; vii, 14, 15). Though God in

mercy preserves his servants from the monstrous and most abhorred act of self-murder, yet in some melancholy mood, horror of mind, and bitterness of spirit, they are not quite freed from all impatient wishes that way, and sudden suggestions thereunto. "My bones waxed old," saith David, "through my roaring all the day long. Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over my head: as an heavy burthen they are too heavy for me. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. I am feeble and sore broken, I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart" (Psalm xxxii, 3, 4; xxxviii, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8). Hear also into what a depth of spiritual distress three worthy servants of God in these later times were plunged and pressed down under the sense of God's anger for sin. Blessed Mrs. Bretergh upon her last bed was horribly hemmed in with the sorrows of death; the very grief of hell laid hold upon her soul; "a roaring wilderness of woe was within her," as she confessed of herself. She said, her sins had made her a prey to Satan, and wished that she had never been born, or that she had been made any other creature rather than a woman. She cried out many times, "Woe, woe, woe, &c. A weak, a woful, a wretched, a forsaken woman;" with tears continually trickling from her eyes. Mr. Peacock, that man of God, in that his dreadful visitation and desertion, recounting some smaller sins, burst out into these words. "And for these," saith he, "I feel now a hell in my conscience." Upon other occasions he cried out, groaning most pitifully. "Oh me, wretch! Oh mine heart is miserable! Oh, oh, miserable and woful! The burthen of my sin lieth so heavy upon me, I doubt it will break my heart. Oh how woful and miserable is my state, that thus must converse with hell-hounds!" When by-standers asked if he would pray, he answered, I cannot. Suffer us, say they, to pray for you. "Take not," replied he, "the name of God in vain, by praying for a reprobate."

"What grievous pangs, what sorrowful torments, what boiling heats of the fire of hell that blessed saint of God, John Glover, felt inwardly in his spirit," saith Fox, in his Acts and Monuments, "no speech outwardly is able to express. Being young," saith he, "I remember I was once or twice with him, when partly by his talk I perceived, and partly by mine own eyes saw to be so worn and consumed

by the space of five years, that neither almost any brooking of meat, quietness of sleep, pleasure of life; yea, and almost no kind of senses, was left in him. Upon apprehension of some backsliding he was so perplexed, that if he had been in the deepest pit of hell, he could almost have despaired no more of his salvation," saith the same author. "In which intolerable griefs of mind," saith he, "although he neither had, nor could have any joy of his meat; yet was he compelled to eat against his appetite, to the end to defer the time of his damnation so long as he might, thinking with himself no less, but that he must needs be thrown into hell, the breath being once out of his body."

I dare not pass out of this point, lest some child of God should be here discouraged, before I tell you that every one of these three last named was at length blessedly recovered, and did rise most gloriously out of their several depths of extremest spiritual misery, before their end. Hear, therefore, also Mrs. Brettergh's triumphant songs and raptures of spirit after the return of her well-beloved: "O Lord Jesu, dost thou pray for me? O blessed and sweet Saviour, how wonderful, how wonderful, how wonderful are thy mercies! Oh, thy love is unspeakable, that hast dealt so graciously with me. Oh my Lord and my God, blessed be thy name for evermore, which hast showed me the path of life. Thou didst, O Lord, hide thy face from me for a little season, but with everlasting mercy thou hast had compassion on me. And now, blessed Lord, thy comfortable presence is come; yea, Lord, thou hast had respect unto thy handmaid, and art come with fulness of joy and abundance of consolations. Oh blessed be thy name, my Lord and my God. Oh, the joys, the joys, the joys that I feel in my soul! Oh, they be wonderful, they be wonderful, they be wonderful! O Father, how merciful and marvellous gracious art thou unto me! Yea, Lord, I feel thy mercy and I am assured of thy love; and so certain am I thereof, as thou art the God of truth, even so sure do I know myself to be thine, O Lord my God: and this my soul knoweth right well. Oh blessed be the Lord: oh blessed be the Lord that hath thus comforted me, and hath brought me now to a place, more sweet unto me than the garden of Eden. Oh the joy, the joy, the delightsome joy that I feel!—Oh praise the Lord for his mercies, and for this joy which my soul feeleth full well; praise his name for evermore."

Hear with what heavenly calmness and sweet comforts Mr. Peacock's heart was refreshed and ravished when the storm was over. "Truly, my heart and soul (saith he, when the tempest was something allayed) have been far led

and deeply troubled with temptations and stings of conscience ; but I thank God they are eased in good measure. Wherefore I desire that I be not branded with the note of a castaway or reprobate. Such questions, oppositions, and all tending thereto, I renounce. Concerning my inconsiderate speeches in my temptation, I humbly and heartily ask mercy of God for them all." Afterward by little and little more light did arise in his heart, and he brake out into such speeches as these : " I do, God be praised, feel such comfort from that—what shall I call it ? Agony, said one that stood by. Nay, quoth he, that is too little ; that had I five hundred worlds, I could not make satisfaction for such an issue, Oh the sea is not more full of water, nor the sun of light, than the Lord of mercy ; yea, his mercies are ten thousand times more. What great cause have I to magnify the great goodness of God that hath humbled, nay rather exalted such a wretched miscreant, and of so base condition, to an estate so glorious and stately ! The Lord hath honoured me with his goodness : I am sure he hath provided a glorious kingdom for me. The joy that I feel in my heart is incredible."

For the third, hear Mr. Fox : " Though that good servant of God suffered many years so sharp temptations and strong buffetings of Satan, yet the Lord, who graciously preserved him all the while, not only at last did rid him out of all discomfort, but also framed him thereby to such mortification of life, as the like hath not been seen ; in such sort, as he being like one placed in heaven already, and dead in this world, both in word and meditation, led a life altogether celestial, abhorring in his mind all profane things."

7. No arm of flesh, or art of man ; no earthly comfort or created power, can possibly heal or help in this heaviest case and extremest horror. Heaven and earth, men and angels, friends and physic, gold and silver, pleasures and preferences, favour of princes, nay, the utmost possibility of the whole creation must let this alone for ever. An Almighty hand and infinite skill must take this in hand, or else never any cure or recovery in this world or the world to come. Bodily diseases may be eased and mollified by medicines. Surgery, as they say, hath a salve for every sore ; poverty may be repaired and relieved by friends ; there is no imprisonment without some hope of enlargement ; suit and favour may help home out of banishment ; innocency and neglect may wear out disgrace ; grief for loss of a wife, a child, or other dearest friend, if not by arguments from reason, that death is unavoidable, necessary, an end of all earthly miseries, the common way of all mankind, &c. yet

at last is lessened and utterly lost by length of time ; cordials of pearl, sapphires, and rubies, with such like, may recomfort the heart possessed with melancholy and drownd in the darkness of that sad and irksome humour. But now not the most exquisite concurrence of all these, nor all the united abilities which lie within the strength and sinews of the arm of flesh, can help any whit at all in this case. Not the exactest quintessence extracted from all the joys, glory, and pleasures that ever the world enjoyed, can procure or minister one jot of ease to a soul afflicted in this kind, and thus trembling under the terrors of God. In such an agony and extremity, hadst thou the utmost aid, and an universal attendance from angels and men ; couldst thou reach the top of the most aspiring human ambition, after the excellency and variety of all worldly felicity ; were thy possessions as large as East and West ; were thy meat continually manna from heaven ; every day like the day of Christ's resurrection ; were thy apparel as costly and glittering as Aaron's ephod ; nay, thy body clothed with the beauty of the sun, and crowned with stars ; yet for all this, and a thousand times more, thy heart within thee would be as cold as a stone, and tremble infinitely above the " heart of a woman, entering into travail of her first child." For, alas ! who can stand before the mighty Lord God ? Who dare plead with him when he is angry ? What spirit of man hath might to wrestle with his Maker ? Who is able to make agreement with the hell of conscience, or to put to silence the voice of desperation ? Oh ! in this conflict alone, and woful wound of conscience, no electuary of pearl or precious balm ; no Bezoar's stone or unicorn's horn, Paracelsian quintessence or potable gold ; no new device of the " knights of the rosy cross," nor the most exquisite extraction which alchemy or art itself can create, is able any whit, or at all, to revive, ease, or assuage. It is only the hand of the Holy Ghost by the blood of that blessed lamb, " Jesus Christ, the holy and the righteous," which can bind up such a bruise.

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## CHAP. II.

Use of the former Doctrine for the Unconverted, to take out the sting of sin by Repentance. One Reason why every Sinner doth not always feel that sting.

THE first use of the former doctrine is for counsel to the unconverted, that they would take the sting out of their sins, and prevent the desperateness and incurableness of this

horrible wound by a humble, sincere, universal turning unto the Lord "while it is called to-day." For assuredly in the mean time, all the sins they have heretofore committed in thought, word, or deed; at any time, in any place, with any company; or to which they have been any ways accessory, are already upon record before the pure eye of that high and everlasting Judge; written exactly by the hand of Divine justice in the book of their consciences with a pen of iron, with a claw of adamant, with the point of a diamond; or, if you can name any thing which makes a stronger, deeper, and more lasting impression: and there they lie like so many lions asleep, and giants refreshing with wine, gathering much desperate poison and stinging points, that whensoever hereafter they shall be effectually and finally awakened by God's angry hand, they may torment most ragingly, and tear their woful souls in pieces everlastingly when there is none to help.

Now we may see and observe many times one little sin (at least in the world's account, and conceit of carnal men) to plunge a guilty conscience into the depth of extremest horror, and a very hell upon earth; as I have heard of and known in many. One, for a sudden unadvised imprecation against her own soul, in case she did so or so; another, for a thought conceived of God, unworthy so great a majesty; another, for covetously keeping a thing found, and not restoring it, or not inquiring after the owner; another, for an adulterous project without any actual pollution; another, by concurring with a company of scoffing Ishmaels only once, and ere he was aware, by lifting up the hands and casting up the eyes in scorn of God's people. Yet afterwards, they sadly revising these miscarriages in cool blood, some of them, some five or six years after, God being then pleased to represent them with terror, and their native stings, were cast into that affliction of conscience and confusion of spirit that their very bones were broken, their faces filled with ghastliness and fear, their bodies possessed with strange tremblings and languishing distempers, their very vital moisture turned into the drought of summer. In which dreadful perplexity they were in great danger of destroying themselves and of being swallowed up of despair. If the guilty sense then of one sin, when God sets it on and says unto it "Torment," draws so many fiery points of stinging scorpions after it, charges upon the excellency of the understanding with such hideous darkness, rends the heart in pieces with such desperate rage, grinds into powder the arm and sinews of all earthly succour, melts, like dew before the sun, all those delights and pleasures which the

whole world offers or affords to comfort in such a case ; in a word, makes a man so extremely miserable, that he would make away with himself, wishes with unspeakable grief that he had never been, that he might return into the abhorred state of annihilation, that he were any other creature, that he might lie hid world without end under some everlasting rock from the face of God ; nay, that he were rather in hell than in his present horror ; — I say, it being thus, what unquenchable wrath, what streams of brimstone, what restless anguish, what gnashing of teeth, what gnawing of conscience, what despairful roarings, what horrible torments, what fiery hells feeding upon his soul and flesh for ever, may every impenitent wretch expect, when the whole black and bloody catalogue of all his sins shall be marshalled and mustered up together at once against him ? every one being sharpened with as much torturing fury as the infinite anger of Almighty God can put into it, after that he hath accursedly with much incorrigible stubbornness outstood the day of his gracious visitation under this glorious sunshine of the gospel, wherein he either hath, or if he had been as provident for his immortal soul as anxious in caring for his rotten carcass might have enjoyed very powerful means all his life long : and yet all the while neglected so great salvation, forsook his own mercy, and so judged himself unworthy of everlasting life !

If a lesser sin many times press so heavy when the conscience is enlightened, how will thy poor soul tremble under the terrible and intolerable weight of all thy sins together ? When all thy lies, all thy oaths, all thy filthy speeches and railings, all thy mad passions and impure thoughts, all thy good-fellow meetings, ale-house hauntings, and scoffings of God's people, all the wrongs thou hast done, all the goods thou hast got ill, all the time thou hast mispent ; thy profanation of every sabbath, thy killing of Christ at every sacrament, thy non-proficiency at every sermon, thy ignorance, thy unbelief, thy worldliness, thy covetousness, thy pride, thy malice, thy lust, thy lukewarmness, impatience, discontentment, vain-glory, self-love, the innumerable swarms of vain, idle, wandering, and wicked imaginations ; in a word, all the pollutions, distempers, and estrangements from God in thine heart ; all the villanies, vanities, and rebellions of thy whole life ; — I say, when all these shall be charged upon thy graceless soul by the implacable indignation of that highest Majesty, whose mercy, ministry, and long-suffering thou hast shamefully abused ; whose anger, patience, and pure eye thou hast villanously provoked all thy life long, alas ! what wilt thou do then ? What " wings

of the morning" will then carry thee out of the reach of God's revenging hand? What cave shall receive thee? What mountain canst thou get by entreaty to fall upon thee? What darkest midnight or hellish dungeon shall hide thee from that wrath which thou shalt be neither able to abide nor to avoid? In this case I would not have thy heart in my breast one hour, for the riches, glory, and pleasures of ten thousand worlds.

Neither bless thyself in the mean time because thou hast neither fear, foretaste, nor feeling of the wrath which is to come, the vengeance which hangs over thine head, and the horror which follows thee at the heels, for that is the very complement of thy misery and perfection of thy madness. To be sick, and senseless of it, is the sorest sickness. To have Satan pierce thy soul with so many sins one after another and to feel no smart, is a most desperate security. To have all this misery hanging over thee, and to be confident and fearless, is the "misery of miseries."

The reasons why thou art at rest from their guilty rage in the mean time, and that so many sleeping lions, I mean all thine unpardoned sins, do not yet awake and stir, terrify and tear in pieces, are such as these :

1. Satan is subtle, so that he will not meddle much or molest thee extremely, until he be able to do thee an irrecoverable mischief. He is wont not to appear in his true likeness, and so terribly; not so much to disquiet and trouble any of his own, before he have them at some dead lift and desperate advantage, as under some extraordinary cross, great disgrace, grievous sickness; in time of some deep melancholy, unavoidable danger, universal confusion, when he conceives in all probability that they have outstood the day of their visitation, hardened their hearts that they cannot repent, received the sentence of death against themselves; and at such other like times, when he hopes he shall be able to crush and confound them suddenly, utterly, and for ever. And then he appears the devil indeed, and shows himself in his own colours. For he then infinitely endeavours with all cunning and cruel industry, after he hath wafted them awhile down the current of the times with as much carnal peace and pleasure as he could possibly, to cast them upon the rock of a most dreadful ruin, and swallow them up quick in the gulph of calamity and woe, of despair, self-destruction, everlasting perdition of body and soul. But you must know that in the mean time, until he can espy such an opportunity, he labours might and main to keep them in as merry a mood as may be. He lays about him by all ways and means he can devise to

plot and provide for them, and that with great variety and curiosity, fresh successions and supplies continually of pleasures, contentments, the countenance and favours of the times, sensual satisfactions, all earthly prosperities. If he can help it, and have his will, they shall wallow still in all worldly felicity, and be attended upon with all the delights their hearts can desire. And all this to continue them with more easiness and irresistance in the broad way; and lest otherwise they should grow weary of his slavery, sensible of their gilded fetters, and so labour after liberty and enlargement from his hellish bondage; for he knows full well, that if they endured much hardship in his service, they might perhaps think of seeking after a new master; that want of comfort in the world, might draw their hearts to delight in the word; not finding happiness upon earth, might make them inquire after that which is in heaven; that crosses and crossing their courses being sanctified for that purpose, may haply help to break their hearts and bring them to remorse for sin, which he mainly fears, and opposeth with all the craft and power he can possibly, lest thereupon they break out of his fool's paradise into the garden of grace; out of the warm sun into God's blessing.

In managing this main policy for the more secure detainment of his vassals in the invisible chains of darkness and damnation, and in an everlasting distaste and disaffection to the good way; by holding up their hearts in his sinful service, and wooing them to go on quietly towards hell without any grumbling, he works many ways:—

(1.) He plots all he can to procure them success in their wicked enterprises and unlawful attempts, especially against the faithful ministers and people of God; for that doth infinitely confirm, harden, and encourage them in their profane courses and opposition to grace. Herein he doth many times mightily prevail by improving the opportunities and pressing the advantages which he gains by the executions of God's justice and rebellions of his children. The sins even of his own people do many times provoke God's just indignation against them, and enforce him to raise up their adversaries as scourges, and to give them success for the humiliation and chastisement of his chosen. See Psalm lxxxi, 12—15; Isa. x, 5, 6; Ezek. xxii, 19, 20. Whereupon Satan fills the hearts of the wicked so prevailing and conquering with a great deal of pride, self-applause, insolence, contempt of godliness, self-conceitedness of their own righteousness and worth, and so hardens them extraordinarily, and holds them with much obstinate resolution in the ways of death, and prejudice against the holy path. He helps

all he can to have them thrive and prosper by oppression, usury, simony, sacrilege, bribery, covetousness, cozening, Machiavelian tricks, &c., that so his service may seem more sweet and gainful unto them. To the effecting whereof he receives notable assistance and special advantage from the corruptions of the times and conscientious simplicity of the saints. For the first, these worst and ulcerous times, wherein so many vines, olive trees, and fig trees wither away in obscurity, and so many brambles brave it abroad in the world, tumbling themselves in the pleasures, splendour, and glory of the present; wherein so many brave "princes are walking as servants upon the earth;" and too many servants of luxury and pride are mounted on horseback; I say, they are the only season for Satan to gratify all his graceless ones, and to hoist them up by the common but accursed stairs and stirrups of bribing, baseness, temporizing, ill offices to humour greatness, and other such vile means and accommodations, into eminency in the world, and high rooms, where he keeps them in a golden captivity with great contentment, and locks them full-fast in the scorner's chair, with much security to their own sensual hearts, and notorious service to himself. Whereas, in deed and truth, to men that have eyes in their heads, the ascent is slippery, the top shaking, the downfall desperate. For the second, it is incredible to consider what a deal of advantage in worldly dealings the covetous devil, in a cruel and crafty worldling, doth suck out of the single-heartedness, plain dealing, and unsuspectingness of conscientious men, for their rising and enriching, if God cross it not.

(2.) He draws them, by all the baits he can devise, to all the incentives and preservatives of carnal contentment, as to taverns, ale-houses, play-houses, brothels, gaming houses, to May-games, morrice dances, to cards, to dice, to dancing, to feasts, wakes, misrules, drinking matches, revellings, and a world of such sinful haunts, bedlam fooleries, and good-fellow meetings, wherein he is mightily furthered by wicked men's impatience of solitariness, and their enraged eagerness of carrying with them to hell as many as may be. For the first, "Though a good man," as Solomon saith, "be satisfied from himself," dare full well, and desires full often to be alone, because the bird of the bosom sings sweetly to his soul in solitariness, yet all the sons and daughters of pleasure have no pleasure at all, nay ordinarily are most loth to be by themselves. Solitariness puts them in gloomy fear, makes them extremely melancholy and weary of themselves. They would rather be anywhere, in any company, any ways employed

than alone. Mistake me not, they can walk by themselves to feed upon contemplative filth, speculative wantonness, and adulteries of the heart; to plot revenge, preferment, enlargement of their estate; to renew upon their sensual hearts their youthful pleasures; but to be alone purposely to deal with God and their own consciences about their spiritual state they abhor, they cannot endure; it is to them a torture, a rack, the very beginning of hell; and that is the reason, to decline the stings of guiltiness and torment before their time, why they have so often recourse unto the arm of flesh for refreshing, to the mirth and madness of wine, pleasures, and many other fugitive follies; that they cast themselves into such knots of good-fellowship, appoint so many set matches of jovial meetings, and hunt after such variety of the times' entertainment (as they call it), which they account the very life of their life, and without which they would rather be underground than above it. For the second, hear how swaggeringly they cry unto their companions in iniquity, to make haste with them towards hell. "Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them up alive, as the grave, and whole, as those that go down into the pit; we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil. Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse." (Prov. i, 11—14.) "Come on, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let no flower of the spring pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered. Let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness. Let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place; for this is our portion, and our lot is this." And in all these cursed conventicles of good-fellowship, and furious combinations for profaneness and against piety, the devil himself is ever present amongst them as their chief director; and there disposeth, inclines, manageth and accommodates all opportunities, circumstances, occurrents, men's several corruptions, and pregnancy of their wicked wits, to make their meetings as merry as may be, and to put all possible sensual sweetness into their carnal delights.

(3.) Lastly, that which is principally for my purpose, besides that like a crafty juggler he casts a mist before the eyes of his slaves, and like a false merchant puts a counterfeit gloss upon the face of sin, he also hides away the sting from them, and withholds the horror until afterward. Every sin in its own nature ever looks fouler than the devil himself. Oh that the ugly, fearful, and filthy shape of it could be seen

with bodily eyes, that thereby it might provoke all men to a mortal and immortal hate and detestation of it! The sting is pointed with the keen unquenchable wrath of God; the horror is heated with the very fire of hell; and yet ordinarily Satan takes care by his craft and industry that these never appear, until he thinks that in all probability the sight of them will sink their souls into irrecoverable woe.

The not feeling then of their spiritual misery is so far from making them not miserable, that it ministers occasion to the devil's malice, mightily to aggravate their misery both present and future.

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### CHAP. III.

Five other Reasons why a Sinner doth not always feel the Sting of Sin.

2. ANOTHER reason why many are not troubled in a course of sin, though there be infinite cause, and a world of woe to come, is because their consciences, by reason of surfeit in sin, and being drunk with worldly delights as with sweet wine, are cast into a dead sleep, and there lulled still, and locked fast in an imaginary paradise of golden dreams and transitory fancies, by the charms and enchantments of earthly pleasures. And if at any time any noise of terror sound in their ears from the Lord's trumpeters in the ministry of the word, so that they begin to stir, then the devil begins to bestir himself, and to rock them fast again with his syren-songs in the cradle of security. Here, therefore, we may take notice of a fourfold conscience: (1.) That which is both *good* and *quiet*, when it hath peace with God and with itself; so that the happy soul may sweetly sing in its own bosom, "My beloved is mine and I am his." (2.) That which is neither *good* nor *quiet*, when it lies forlorn under the sense of God's wrath and full of horror in itself, as that of Judas, &c. (3.) That which is *good* but not *quiet*, when the pleased face of God doth shine upon it through the blood of Christ, and yet it feels not the comfort of that blessed reconciliation, as in many new converts, who being truly humbled for all sin, cast themselves upon the Lord Jesus and his sure promises for spiritual and eternal life, and yet are not as yet sensible of any assurance. (4.) That which is *quiet* but not *good*, when it is as full of sin as a toad of venom, as hell of darkness; and all those innumerable sins unrepented of, unpardoned, like so many mad ban-dogs and fell mastiffs, though asleep for the present, will in the evil day, especially of sickness, death,

judgment, fly in the face of the proudest Nimrod, ready to pluck out his very heart, and to torment him with unspeakable horror; and yet for all this it is untroubled, senseless, and secure. This kind of conscience is to be found, I fear, in the most that hear me this day, and so generally over the kingdom. It doth not yet trouble and terrify, —

[1.] A great number, by reason of their ignorance in the book of God, and by consequent unacquaintedness with the sinfulness and cursedness of the spiritual state revealed thereby. This is the very case of a world of poor ignorant, besotted souls amongst us, more is the pity, especially now when the glorious sun of Christ's gospel shines so fair and fully in many places. For want of light in God's law they look upon their sins as we do upon the stars in a cloudy night, see only the great ones of the first magnitude, and here one and there one. But if they were further enlightened and informed aright, they might behold them as those infinite orbs in the fairest frosty winter's midnight. A worthy divine sets out excellently the quietness of this ignorant conscience by a very fit resemblance, thus: "Men judge of their ignorant consciences," saith he, "as they do of their blind, dumb, and ignorant ministers. Such neither do nor can preach, can neither tell men of their sins nor of their duties. Ask such a blind-guide's people what their opinion is of him, and what kind of man their minister is, and you shall have him magnified for a passing honest, harmless man; wondrous quiet among his neighbours. They may do what they will for him, he is none of those troublesome fellows that will be reproving their faults or complaining of their disorders in the pulpit. Oh, such an one is a quiet good man indeed! Thus judge many of their consciences. If their consciences be quiet and lie not grating upon them, and telling them that their courses are sinful and damnable, and that their persons are in a dangerous condition: but rather by their silence, ignorance, and vain pretences do justify them, and tell them all will be well enough; oh, then what excellent consciences have these men! They make no conscience of family duties; once in the year to come to the sacrament serves their turn; they are common swearers in their ordinary communication; make no conscience of sanctifying sabbaths; and their consciences let them alone in all these, do not give them one syllable of ill language. Oh, what gentle and good-natured consciences think these men they have! But, alas! what evil consciences have they!"

[2.] Nor others, by reason of a covenant with death and an agreement with hell. Such as those, Isa. xxviii, 15, who

negotiate by their plausible agents, ease, pleasures, prosperity; and conclude some kind of concord and composition for a time with Satan, sin, and their own consciences. But to tell you the truth, it is no true peace, but a politic truce. For these implacable, desperate spiritual enemies of theirs are ever in the mean time preparing arms, ordnance, and many fiery darts; still levying of fresh forces, whole armies of fiery scorpions and flaming terrors, with which as soon as the truce is ended they will set upon them with more violence, fury, and fierceness than ever before.

[3.] Nor others, by reason of an insensible hardness grown over, and a desperate searedness impressed upon their consciences by extraordinary villany and variety in sin. Such as those, Isa. v, 18, by "drawing iniquity a long time with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope;" by waving the glorious light of the word under which they sit and which shines in their faces, as a "foolish thing;" by villanously trampling under foot the power of it with despite and scorn many times against that light, which stands in their consciences like an armed man; nay, and by treading out through custom in sin the very notions that nature hath engraven in their hearts, as men do the engravings of tomb-stones which they walk upon with foul shoes: I say thus, at length, their consciences become so utterly remorseless and past all feeling; so hardened, so seared, so sealed up with a reprobate sense, that with an audacious and giantlike insolency they challenge even God Almighty himself to draw his sword of vengeance against them. "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: that say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!" These roarers and swaggering Belials in this respect have consciences worse than the devil himself; for he "believes and trembles." Even those already desperate and damned spirits, tremble at the forethought of that fuller wrath which is to come, and yet further deserved damnation.

[4.] Nor others, who, when it begins ever and anon to grumble, mutter, and make a noise, lull it asleep again with songs of pleasure, and still the cries of it with outward mirth, as Saul was wont to lay the evil spirit with music. These men's consciences are quiet, not because they are savingly appeased; but because they are sensually pleased: not because they want matter to trouble and terrify; but because they will give them no leisure to set their sins in order before them. For this purpose, and to keep these

furious mastiffs muzzled for the present, they have recourse unto and improve both variety of delights and multiplicity of employments. For the first: "This is the reason," as one saith wittily, "that many are so eager in the pursuit of their pleasures, because they would make God's serjeant, their own conscience, that pursues them, drunk with these pleasures; just as many men use to do, getting the serjeant that comes to arrest them into the tavern, and there making him drunk that so they may escape." For the second, How was it possible that Ahithophel should hold out so long from hanging himself and horrible confusion of spirit, especially since he harboured in his bosom such a false, rotten, abominable heart, as appeared by that villanous counsel he gave Absalom, to lie with his father's concubines "in the sight of all Israel;" except he had been a counsellor of state, and so necessarily taken up continually with extraordinary variety, vicissitude, and succession of most weighty and important affairs, which would wholly possess his mind with an uninterrupted attention, agitation, and exercise, and not give it any leave to reflect upon itself with those severer cogitations in cold blood which are wont to correct and condemn the enormity of exorbitant courses? And thus in all ages, many great men of great wisdom, being great offenders, purposely put and plunge themselves into multitude of business, that they may have no leisure to listen unto that which their consciences would secretly tell them in their ear of their Machiavelian plots, prodigious lusts, and plausible cruelties. The noise of attendants, visitants, dependents, and great employments, drown the voice of conscience in such cases, as the drums in the sacrifices to Moloch drowned the cry of the infants. But while the men of the world are thus wholly detained, and do so greedily and purposely pass away the time with cares of this life and dealings in the world, their consciences deal with them as creditors with their debtors; while they have any doings, and are in trading, in policy they let them alone and say nothing; but if once down the wind, in sickness, poverty, disgrace, then comes serjeant after serjeant, arrest upon arrest, action upon action. All their sins are set in order before them and fall full foul upon the now distressed soul, as ravens upon the fallen sheep to pick out the very eyes and heart of it, and to keep it down in the dungeon of despair for ever.

[5.] Nor others, because they cozen themselves with a formal false conceit of a comfortable spiritual state, as did the pharisee, Luke xv, 11; with a groundless presumption that they are in God's favour, as did those, Matt. vii, 22;

and the five foolish virgins, Matt. xxv ; when, as God knows, they are mere strangers to the mystery of Christ, and far enough from any sound humiliation.

Thus the blindness, security, searedness, slumber, self-deceit, or some other such distemper of the conscience, conceals and keeps in the stings of those sins in sensual men, which, without turning unto the Lord in truth, "while it is called to-day," will hereafter torment with intolerable and restless terror through all eternity.

3. A third reason why thy unlamented and unpardoned sins, though every one of them be armed with a separate fiery sting, and of their own nature so heavy with horror that they are able to sink thee into the bottom of hell, do not as yet stir nor press upon thy soul with the insupportable weight of Divine vengeance, is this: they are in their native soil, where they were born, bred, and brought up in their own element; I mean in a carnal heart, soaking in sensuality and not resolved to be reformed. We say in philosophy, an element is not heavy in its own place. One bucket full of water upon the earth would be burthensome to the back of that man, who, were he in the bottom of the sea, would feel no weight at all from all the water there, though it were three miles high over his head. A sensual heart, settled upon its lees, can bear without sense or complaint a world of wickedness, which out of its element and humour would be crushed into powder, and tremble with horror upon the sad apprehension of the least sin, especially set out by God's just indignation. While Belshazzar was in his element, revelling and rioting amongst his lords, his wives, and his concubines, drinking wine swaggeringly and contemptuously in the golden and silver vessels of the temple, he felt no touch in point of conscience, or terror at all: but, put out of his humour by "the hand writing upon the plaister of the wall, his countenance was presently changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."

4. The never-dying worm that naturally breeds and grows big in every unregenerate conscience, which beats back still the searching power of the word and secret warnings of the Spirit, is like a wolf in the foot; feed it continually with fresh supply of raw flesh, and it will let the body alone; but withdraw that, and it devours upward. While the sons and daughters of pleasure, and all those who have their portion and paradise in this life, stop the mouth of this hellish worm with variety of carnal delights, they do well enough, and find somewhat of ease and exemption for

a time from the rage and bitings thereof: but they may assure themselves, in evil times, when the days are come upon them wherein there is no pleasure, when the play is done, when all worldly comforts and comforters, like runaway servants and drunken serving men, are to seek when they have most use and need of them,—I say, that then the time and turn is come that the worm of conscience, destitute now for ever of any further satisfaction from sensual sweetness, will ragingly turn upon the soul, devour like a lion, gnaw like a vulture, vex eternally.

5. If the weight of the whole world were now laid upon any of these bodies here lately buried, it would not stir or groan. And why? Because it is naturally dead. Proportionably, though the burthen of sin, far heavier than a mountain of lead, than this mighty and massive earth under our feet, lies upon every impenitent soul, ready every hour to press and plunge it into the lowest pit; yet, wretched and bewitched thing, it neither feels any smart, nor fears any hurt; it is neither sensible of the present weight, nor troubled for future wrath. And what is the reason? It is spiritually dead: it is stark “dead in trespasses and sins.” The strong man is gone away with all; and there is no stirring nor sense of this cursed burthen, until either a “stronger than he” lay hands upon this hellish tyrant, disarm him and throw down his holds; and a mightier voice of the Son of God than that which made Lazarus come out of the grave, put life into it; or else that the dreadful thunder of God’s fierce and final wrath, the day of visitation being expired, awake it to everlasting woe.

6. Though in the mean time thou be extremely miserable, and if thou diest in thine impenitent state this day, thou must most certainly lodge this night in the lake of fire and brimstone among the damned; yet thy sins for the present do not represent to the eye of thy conscience those forms of foulness and terror, of which they are naturally full, and which without timely repentance thou wilt hereafter find and feel in them to thine endless grief; because thou lookest upon them in the false glass of vain-glory, ignorance, self-love, self-conceitedness, painted over by the devil’s daubing, with lewd enticing colours of pleasure, profit, preferment, worldly applause, and other such goodly and golden outsides. Whereas a true and effectual beholding them in the clear crystal of God’s pure law, hunted continually at the heels with Divine vengeance, all the curses in this book, and plagues innumerable, internal, external, eternal, and in the bitter passion of Jesus Christ, without whose heart’s blood not the least sin that ever was com-

mitted could ever have been remitted, were able to fright a very blackmoor out of his black skin, and a leopard from his spots (Jer. xiii, 23). And thou something eapest thine heart also against the terror of the Lord for thy sins, by looking upon God's mercy with false spectacles, and so enlarging it beyond the limits of his truth. But hear what an excellent discoverer of the depths of our self-cozening hearts tells thee in such a case: "As a man passing over a bridge, which his false spectacles make to seem broader than indeed it is, being thereby deceived, goes beside the bridge and so is drowned; so is it with those whose deceitful hearts make the bridge of God's mercy larger than it is; they are in danger of falling beside it into the waters of eternal destruction. For though God's mercy be of the largest extent, yet it is bounded with his truth; and therefore usually in the scriptures we find these two coupled together, God's mercy and his truth." Now his truth tells us, that the good tidings of the gospel belong only to the poor, to the broken-hearted, to the captives, to the blind, to the bruised (Luke iv, 18); that he only, who "confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy" (Prov. xxviii, 13); that "except we repent we shall all perish" (Luke xiii, 3); that "except we be born again we cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii, 3); that "God will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses" (Psalm lxviii, 21); that "if we regard iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear us" (Psalm lxvi, 18); that "no fornicator, nor idolater, nor adulterer, nor effeminate, nor abuser of himself with mankind, nor thief, nor covetous man, nor drunkard, nor reviler, nor extortioner, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi, 9, 10); that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii, 14); that "every one that calleth on the name of Christ savingly must depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii, 19). Compare now these and the like places with thine heart, life, and present impenitent state, and tell me in cool blood and impartially, whether any mercy at all as yet belongs unto thee upon good ground, yet lying in thy sins.

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#### CHAP. IV.

The second use of the former Doctrine for the Converted, that they sin no more; and to keep them from sin, Seven Considerations are given them.

In the second place, the point may serve for warning to those who are already washed from their sins, that they defile their souls no more, who having been cured by cast-

Yet those few enlightened souls whose eyes have been happily opened by spiritual eye-salve to "turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," behold a double deformity and ugliness in so foul a monster, deceitfully dressed in the devil's counterfeit colours, and gilded over garishly in his personated angelical glory.

3. It is most filthy: far filthier than the most offensive collection of all the most filthy, fulsome, and loathsome things in the world. And it must needs be so; for whatever a man can conceive to be most contrary, distant, and opposite to the infinite clearness, purity, sweetness, beauty, and goodness of God; all that and much more is sin in the highest degree. Hence it is, that in the scriptures it is compared to the filthiest mire, in which a sow will lie down to cool and cover herself; to the loathsome vomit, not of a man, but of a dog (2 Pet. ii, 22); to the unsavoury poisonous damp which rotten carcasses exhale out of opened graves (Rom. iii, 13); to menstuous filth (Ezek. xxxvi, 17); to the dirt under the nails, or the offensive exudations of the body, or the putrified matter of some pestilent ulcer; to the very refuse which nature having severed from the purer part of the meat, thrusts out of the stomach and casts into the draught; to the filthiness, pollutions, and impurities of the world, so called by a singularity, for sin is the transcendent filth of the world (2 Pet. ii, 20); to all the uncleannesses for which the purifications, cleansings, washings, and sprinklings were appointed in the Levitical law; to abomination itself (Ezek. xxii, 2). Nay, and yet further, which makes for the further detestation of sin, whereas all outward filth defiles only the body, this of sin, by the strength and contagion of its insinuating poison, soaks through the flesh and the bone, and enters and eats into the very "mind and conscience" (Tit. i, 15), defiles the pure and immortal soul of man. How long might we cast dirt into the air before we were able to infect the bright shining beams of the sun! Yet so filthy is sin, that at once with a touch it infects the soul, a clearer and purer essence than it, and that with such a crimson and double-dyed stain, that the flood of Noah, when all the world was water, could not wash it off. Neither at that last and dreadful day, when this great universe shall be turned into a ball of fire for the purifying and renewing of the heaven and the earth, yet shall it have no power to purge or cleanse the least sin out of the impenitent soul; nay, the fire of hell, which burns night and day even through all eternity, shall never be able to raze it out.

4. It is most infectious, spits venom on all sides far and

wide; corrupts every thing it comes near. By reason whereof it is fitly resembled to leaven (Matt. xvi, 12; 1 Cor. v, 6); to a canker (2 Tim, ii, 17); to the leprosy, which filthy disease quickly overspreads the whole body (Numb. xii, 10), infects the clothes, the very walls of the house (Levit. xiv, 37), and their posterity (2 Kings v, 27). The first sin that ever the sun saw was so pregnant with soul-killing poison, that it hath polluted all the sons and daughters of Adam that were ever since, and will still by the irresistible strength of the same contagion poison all their natures to the world's end. Nay, at the very first breaking out it suddenly blasted, as it were, both heaven and earth, and so stained the beauty of the one, the brightness of the other, and the original orient newly burnished glory of the whole creation, that from that hour it hath groaned under the burthen of that vanity and deformity to which this first sin hath made it subject; and will travail in pain under the bondage of the same corruption (Rom. viii, 19—22), until it be purged by fire in the great day of the Lord (2 Pet. iii, 10, 11). If but one sin be doated upon delightfully and impenitently, like a lump of leaven it sours all the soul; defiles the whole man, and every thing that proceeds from him; his thoughts, desires, affections, words, actions, and that of all sorts, natural, civil, recreative, religious. It doth not only unhallow his meat, drink, carriage; his buying, selling, giving, lending, and all his other dealings in the world, even his ploughing, "the ploughing of the wicked is sin" (Prov. xxi, 4); but also turns all his spiritual services and holiest duties, his prayer, hearing, reading, receiving the sacrament, &c. into abomination. If but one raging corruption in a minister, magistrate, master of a family (as lying, swearing, filthy talking, scoffing at religion, opposition to godliness, sabbath-breaking, a humour of good-fellowship, or the like) represent itself to the eye of the world in his ordinary carriage, and hang out as a rotten fruit in the sight of the sun, it is wont fearfully to infect or offend by a contagious insinuation and ill example all about him; to diffuse its venom to his family, amongst his sons and servants, over the parish where he lives, all companies where he comes, yea, the whole country round about, especially if he be a man of eminence and place.

5. It is extremely evil\*. A far greater evil than the eternal damnation of a man; for when he hath laid many millions of years in the lake of fire and under the dominion of the

\* I understand evil in a general sense, and not as restrained unto, or resident in any species.

Yet those few enlightened souls whose eyes have been happily opened by spiritual eye-salve to "turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," behold a double deformity and ugliness in so foul a monster, deceitfully dressed in the devil's counterfeit colours, and gilded over garishly in his personated angelical glory.

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second death, he is never the nearer to satisfaction for sin. Not all those hellish flames through all eternity can possibly expiate the stain or extinguish the sting of the least sin: nay, the very destruction of all the creatures in the world, of men and angels, heaven and earth, is a great deal less ill than to offend God with the least transgression of his laws. For all the creatures of ten thousand worlds, were they all extant, come infinitely short in excellency of worth of the heart's blood of Jesus Christ; and yet without the effusion of it, no sin could ever have been pardoned, nor any soul saved. A man would think it a lesser evil to tell a lie than to lie in hell; but hear Chrysostom: "Although many think hell to be the supreme and sorest of all evils, yet I think thus, and thus will I daily preach, that it is far more bitter and more grievous to offend Christ than to be tormented with the pains of hell.

6. It is full of most fearful effects.

First; it deprives every impenitent (1.) Of the favour and love of God, the only fountain of all comfort, peace, and happiness, which is incomparably the most invaluable loss that can be imagined. (2.) Of his portion in Christ's blood, of which though the drops, weight, and quantity be numbered, finite, and measurable, yet the person that shed it hath stamped upon it such height of price, excellency of merit, invaluable worth, that he had infinitely better have his portion in that sweetest well-spring of life and immortality, than enjoy the riches, pleasures, and glory of the whole world everlastingly; for a bitter-sweet taste of which for an inch of time, he villanously trampleth under foot, as it were, that blessed blood, by wilfully cleaving to his own ways, and furiously following the swing of his own sensual heart, even against the check and contradiction of his grumbling conscience. (3.) Of the most blissful presence, freedom, and communication of the Holy Ghost, and all those divine illuminations, spiritual feastings, sudden and secret glimpses and glances of heavenly light, sweeter than sweetness itself, wherewith that good Spirit is wont to visit and refresh the humbled hearts of holy men. (4.) Of the fatherly providence and protection of the blessed Trinity, the glorious guards of angels, the comfortable communion with the people of God, and all the happy consequents of safety, deliverance, and delight that floweth thence. (5.) Of the unknown pleasures of an appeased conscience, a jewel of dearest price, to which all human glory is but dust in the balance. Not the most exquisite extraction of all manner of music, vocal or instrumental, can possibly convey so delicious a touch and taste to the

outward ear of a man as the sound and sense of a certificate brought from the throne of mercy by the blessed Spirit, sealed with Christ's blood, to the ear of the soul, even amidst the most desperate confusions in the evil day, when comfort will be worth a world, and a good conscience more valuable than ten thousand earthly crowns. (6.) Of all true contentment in this life; of all Christian right and religious interest to any of the creatures. For never was any sound joy or sanctified enjoyment of any thing in the world found in that man's heart which gives allowance to any lust, or lies delightfully in any sin. (7.) Of an immortal crown, the unspeakable joys of heaven, that immeasurable and endless comfort which there shall be fully and for ever enjoyed with all the children of God, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, Christian friends, yea, with the Lord himself, and all his angels; with Christ our Saviour, that Lamb slain for us, the Prince of glory, the glory of heaven and earth, the brightness of the everlasting light; in a word, of all those inexplicable, nay, inconceivable excellences, pleasures, perfections, felicities, sweetnesses, beauties, glories, eternities above.

Secondly. It doth every hour expose him to all those evils which a man destitute of divine grace may commit, and, unprotected from above, endure. It brings all plagues, (1.) Internal: blindness of mind, hardness of heart, deadness of affection, searedness of conscience, a reprobate sense, strong delusions, the spirit of slumber, slavery to lust, estrangedness from God, bondage under the devil, desperate thoughts, horror of heart, confusion of spirit, &c. and spiritual mischiefs in this kind more and more dreadful than either tongue can tell or heart can think; the least of which is far worse than the plagues of Egypt. (2.) External. See Deut. xxviii, 15. (3.) Eternal. See my sermon on the Four Last Things.

Thirdly. By its pestilent damning property and poison, it turns heaven into hell, angels into devils, life into death, light into darkness, sight into blindness, faith into distrust, hope into despair, love into hate, humility into pride, mercy into cruelty, security into fear, liberty into bondage, health into sickness, plenty into scarceness, a garden of Eden into a desolate wilderness, a fruitful land into barrenness, peace into war, quietness into contention, obedience into rebellion, order into confusion, virtues into vices, blessings into curses; in a word, all kind of temporal and eternal felicities and bliss, into all kinds of miseries and woe.

7: What heart, except it be all adamant and turned into a rock of flint, but possessing itself with feeling thoughts, and

a sensible apprehension of the incomprehensible greatness, excellency, and dreadfulness of the mighty Lord of heaven and earth, would not tremble and be strangely confounded to transgress and break any one branch of his blessed laws, especially purposely and with pleasure, or to sin against him willingly but in the least ungodly thought? For, alas! who art thou that liftest up thy proud heart, or whettest thy profane tongue, or bendest thy rebellious course against such a majesty? Thou art the vilest wretch that ever God made, next to the devil and his damned angels; a base and an unworthy worm of the earth, not worthy to lick the dust that lieth under his feet: a most weak and frail creature, earth, ashes, or any thing that is nought, the dream of a shadow, the very picture of change, worse than vanity, less than nothing: who, when thy breath is gone, which may fall out many times in a moment, thou turnest into dust, nay, rottenness and filth much more loathsome than the dung of the earth, and all thy thoughts perish. But now, on the other side, if thou cast thine eyes seriously and with intention upon that thrice glorious and highest Majesty, the eyes of whose glory thou so provokest with thy filth and folly, thou mayest most justly upon the commission of every sin cry out with the prophet, “(O heavens be astonished at this, be afraid and utterly confounded!” Nay, thou mightest marvel, and it is God’s unspeakable mercy, that the whole frame of heaven and earth is not for one sin fearfully and finally dissolved and brought to nought! For he against whom thou sinnest “inhabiteh eternity, and unapproachable light. The heaven is his throne and the earth his footstool; he is the everlasting God, mighty and terrible, the Creator of the ends of the earth,” &c. The infinite splendor of his glory and majesty so dazzles the eyes of the most glorious seraphim, that they are glad to adore him with covered faces (Isaiah vi). The devil and all the damned spirits, those stubborn fiends, tremble at the terror of his countenance. “All the nations before him are but as the drop of a bucket, but as the small dust of the balance;” nay “they are nothing to him,” saith the prophet, “yea less than nothing.” “He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers: the judges, and princes, when he blows upon them are but as stubble before the whirlwind: and he taketh up the isles as a very little thing” (Isa. xl). At his rebuke the pillars of heaven do shake; the earth trembleth, and the foundations of the hills are moved (Psalm xviii, 7); his presence melts the mountains (Nahum i, 5); his voice tears the rocks in pieces; the blast of the breath of his nostrils discovers the channels of waters,

and foundations of the world (Psalm xviii, 15); when he is angry, his arrows drink blood, his sword devours flesh, and the fire of his wrath burns unto the lowest hell (Deut. xxxii, 22, 42); the heaven is but his span; the sea his handful (Isa. xl, 12); the wings of the wind his walk; his garments are light (Psalm civ, 3, 2); his pavilion darkness (Psalm xviii, 11); his way is in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet (Nahum i, 3). The Lord of Hosts is his name (Jer. li, 19), whose power and punishments are so infinitely irresistible, that he is able with one word to turn all the creatures in the world into hell; nay, even with the breath of his mouth to turn heaven, and hell, and earth, and all things into nothing. How darest thou then, so base and vile a wretch, provoke so great a God?

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## CHAP. V.

### Thirteen other Considerations to keep Men from Sin.

8. LET the consideration and compassion upon the immortality and dearness of that precious soul that lies in thy bosom, curb thy corruptions at the very first sight of sin, and make thee step back as though thou wert ready to tread upon a serpent. Not all the wicked men upon earth, nor all the devils in hell, can possibly kill and extinguish the soul of any man; it must needs live as long as God himself, and run parallel with the longest line of eternity. Only sin wounds mortally that immortal spirit, and brings it into that cursed case, that it had infinitely better never have been, than be for ever. For by this means, going on impenitently to that last tribunal, it becomes "immortally mortal, and mortally immortal," as one of the ancients speaks. "It lives to death, and dies to life;" never in state of life or death, yet ever in the pains of death and the perpetuity of life; its death is ever living and its end is ever in beginning; death without death; end without end." Ever in the pangs of death, and never dead; not able to die, nor endure the pain; pain exceeding not only all patience, but all resistance. No strength to sustain, nor ability to bear that, which hereafter, whilst God is God, for ever must be borne. What a prodigiously mad cruelty is it then for a man, by listening to the syren songs of this false world, the lewd motions of his own treacherous heart, or the devil's desperate counsels, to embrue his hands in the blood of his own everlasting soul, and to make it to die eternally! For a little paltry pleasure of some base and rotten lust, and fleeting

vanity, which passeth away in the act, as the taste of pleasant drink dieth in the draught, to bring upon it in the other world torments without end and beyond all compass of thought! And his madness is the more; because, besides its immortality, his soul is incomparably more worth than the whole world. The very sensitive soul of a little fly, saith Austin truly, "is more excellent than the sun." How ought we then to prize and preserve from sin our understanding, reasonable souls, which make us in that respect like unto the angels of God!

9. What a horrible thing is sin, whose weight an omnipotent strength, which doth sustain the whole frame of the world, is not able to bear! Almighty God complains even of the sacrifices and other services of his own people, when they were performed with polluted hearts; and professes that "he was weary to bear them" (Isa. i, 14). And how vile is it, that stirs up in the dearest and most compassionate bowels of the all-merciful God such implacable anger; that threw down so many glorious angelical spirits, who might have done him so high honour for ever in the highest heavens, into the bottom of hell, there most justly to continue devils, and in extremest torment everlastingly! Cast all mankind out of his favour, and from all felicity, for Adam's sin! Caused him who delighteth in mercy (Micah vii, 18) to create all the afflicting miseries in hell; eternal flames, streams of brimstone, chains of darkness, gnashing of teeth, a lake of fire, the bottomless pit, and all those horrible torments there! And that which doth argue, and yet further amplify the implacableness and depth of Divine indignation, the infiniteness of sin's provocation and desert, "Tophet is said to be ordained of old" (Isa. xxx, 33), "everlasting fire to be prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv, 41); as if the all-powerful Wisdom did deliberate, and as it were sit down and devise all stinging terrible ingredients, a temper of greatest torture, to make that dreadful fire, hellish pains, most fierce and raging, and a fit instrument for the justice of so great and mighty a God to torment eternally all impenitent reprobate rebels. God is the "Father of spirits;" our souls are the immediate creation of his almighty hand; and yet to every one that goeth on impenitently in his trespasses, he hath appointed, as it were, a threefold hell. There are three things considerable in sin. (1.) Aversion from an infinite, sovereign, unchangeable good. (2.) Conversion to a finite, mutable, momentary good. (3.) Continuance in the same. To these three several things in sin, there are answering three singular stings of extremest punishment. To aversion from the chiefest

good, which is objectively infinite, there answereth *pain of loss*, privation of God's glorious presence, and separation from those endless joys above, which is an infinite loss. To the inordinate conversion to transitory things, there answereth *pain of sense*, which is intensively finite, as is the pleasure of sin; and yet so extreme, that none can conceive the bitterness thereof but the soul that suffers it; nor that neither, except it could comprehend the almighty wisdom of him that did create it. To the eternity of sin, remaining for ever in stain and guilt, answereth the eternity of punishment. For we must know, that "every impenitent sinner would sin ever, if he might live ever, and casteth himself by sinning into an impossibility of ever ceasing to sin of himself; as a man that casteth himself into a deep pit can never of himself rise out of it again: and therefore naturally eternity of punishment is due to sin." How prodigious a thing then is sin, and how infinitely to be abhorred and avoided, that by a malignant meritorious poison and provocation doth violently wrest out of the hands of the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort" the full vials of that unquenchable wrath, which brings easeless, endless, and remediless torments upon his own creatures, and those originally most excellent!

10. The height and inestimableness of the price that was paid for the expiation of it, doth clearly manifest, nay infinitely aggravate the execrable misery of sin, and extreme madness of all that meddle with it. I mean the heart's blood of Jesus Christ, blessed for ever, which was of such preciousness and power, that being let out by a spear, it convulsed the whole frame of nature, darkened the sun miraculously (for at that time it stood in direct opposition to the moon), shook the earth, which shrunk and trembled under it, opened the graves, clave the stones, rent the vail of the temple from the bottom to the top, &c. Now it was this alone, and nothing but this could possibly cleanse the filth of sin. Had all the dust of the earth been turned into silver, and the stones into pearls; should the main and boundless ocean have streamed nothing but purest gold; would the whole world and all the creatures in heaven and earth have offered themselves to be annihilated before his angry face; had all the blessed angels prostrated themselves at the foot of their Creator: yet in the point of redemption of mankind and purgation of sin, not any, nor all of these could have done any good at all. Nay, if the Son of God himself, which lay in his bosom, should have supplicated and solicited (I mean without suffering and shedding his blood) the Father of all mercies, he could not

have been heard in this case. Either the Son of God must die, or all mankind be eternally lost. Then, when thou art provoked to sin, think seriously and sensibly of the price that upon necessity must be paid for it before it be pardoned.

11. Sinful pleasures are attended with a threefold bitter sting (whereof see my Directions for Walking with God), which though the devil hides from them in the heat of temptation; yet in his seasons, to serve his own turn, he sets them on with a vengeance.

12. Compare the vast and invaluable difference between yielding to the enticement, and conquering the temptation to sin. For which purpose look upon Joseph and David, two of God's dearest servants, and consider the results. What a deal of honour and comfort did afterward crown the head and the heart of the one, and what horrible mischiefs and miseries fell upon the family, and grisly horrors upon the conscience of the other. Survey also the distinct stories of Galeacius Caracciolus and Francis Spira, than which in their several kinds there is nothing left to the memory of the latter times more remarkable; and you shall find in them as great a difference as between a heaven and hell upon earth. The one withstanding unconquerably variety of mighty enticements to renounce the gospel of Jesus Christ and return to popery; besides the sweet peace of his soul, attained that honour in the church of God that he is in some measure paralleled even with Moses, and recommended to the admiration of posterity by the pen of that great and incomparable glory of the Christian world, blessed Calvin\*. The other, conquered by an unhappy temptation to turn from the truth of God and our true religion to the synagogue of Satan and abominations of the "scarlet whore," besides the raging and desperate confusion he brought upon his own spirit, became such a spectacle to the eye of Christendom as hath been hardly heard of.

13. Compare the poor, short, vanishing delight of the choicest sensual, worldly contentment, if thou wilt, of thy sweetest sin, with the exquisiteness and eternity of hellish torments. Out of which might an impenitent reprobate wretch be assured of enlargement after he had endured them so many thousand, thousand years as there are sands on the sea-shore, hairs upon his head, stars in the firmament, grass piles upon the ground, creatures both in heaven and earth, he would think himself happy, and as it were

\* See Crashaw's Life of Caracciolus.

in heaven already. But when all that time is past, and infinite millions of years besides, they are no nearer the end than when they began, nor he nearer out than when he came in. The torments of hell are most horrible; yet I know not whether this incessant, desperate cry in the conscience of a damned soul, "I must never come out," doth not outgo them all in horror. What an height of madness is it then to purchase a moment of fugitive follies and fading pleasures with extremity of never-ending pains.

14. When thou art stepping over the threshold towards any vile act, lewd house, dissolute company, or to do the devil service in any kind (which God forbid); suppose thou seest Jesus Christ coming towards thee as he lay in the arms of Joseph of Arimathea, newly taken down from the cross, wofully wounded, wan and pale; his body all gore, the beauty of his blessed and heavenly face darkened and disfigured by the stroke of death, speaking thus unto thee, "Oh! go not forward upon any terms; commit not this sin by any means. It was this and the like that drew me down out of the arms of my Father, from the fulness of joy and fountain of all bliss, to put on this corruptible and miserable flesh; to hunger and thirst, to watch and pray, to groan and sigh, to offer up strong cries and tears to the Father in the days of my flesh, to drink off the dregs of the bitter cup of his fierce wrath, to wrestle with all the forces of infernal powers, to lay down my life in the gates of hell with intolerable, and, save by myself, unconquerable pain; and thus now to lie in the arms of this mortal man all torn and rent in pieces with cruelty and spite, as thou seest." What a heart hast thou, that darest go on against this dear entreaty of Jesus Christ!

15. When thou art unhappily moved to break any branch of God's blessed law, let the excellency and variety of his incomparable mercies come presently into thy mind; a most ingenuous, sweet, and mighty motive to hinder and hold off all gracious hearts from sin. How is it possible but a serious survey of the "riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, leading thee to repentance," to more forwardness and fruitfulness in the good way; the public miracles of mercy which God hath done in our days for the preservation of the gospel, this kingdom, ourselves and our posterity, especially drowning the Spanish invincible armada, discovering and defeating the powder-plot, shielding Queen Elizabeth, the most glorious princess of the world, from a world of antichristian cruelties, saving us from the papists' bloody expectations at her death, &c.; the particular and private catalogue of thine own personal fa-

vours from God's bountiful hand, which thine own conscience can easily lead thee unto, and readily run over, from thine infancy to the present, wonderful protections in thine unregenerate time; that miracle of mercies, thy conversion, if thou be already in that happy state; all the motions of God's holy Spirit in thine heart; many checks of conscience, fatherly corrections; excellent means of sanctification, as worthy a ministry in many places as ever the world enjoyed; sermon upon sermon, sabbath after sabbath; bearing with thee after so many times breaking thy covenants; opportunities to attain the highest degree of godliness that ever was;—I say, how can it be, but that the review of these and innumerable mercies more should so soften thy heart, that thou shouldst have no heart at all; nay, infinitely abhor to displease or any way dishonour that high and dreadful Majesty, whose free-grace was the well-head and first fountain of them all.

Let this meditation of God's mercies to keep from sin be quickened by considering: (1.) That thou art far worthier to be now burning with the most abominable wretch in the bottom of hell, than to be crowned with any of these loving kindnesses; that if thou wert able to do him all the honour, service, and worship, which all the saints both militant and triumphant do, it would come infinitely short of the merit of the least of all his mercies unto thee in Jesus Christ. (2.) How unkindly God takes the neglect of his extraordinary kindnesses unto us. 2 Sam. xii, 7 — 9; 1 Sam. ii, 27 — 30; Ezek. xvi.

16. Mark well, and be amazed at thine own fearful and desperate folly. When thou fallest deliberately into any sin, thou layest as it were in the one scale of the balance the glory of Almighty God, the endless joys of heaven, the loss of thine immortal soul, the precious blood of Christ, &c.; and in the other, some rotten pleasure, earthly pelf, worldly preferment, fleshly lust, sensual vanity; and sufferest this (prodigious madness! "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid!") to outweigh all those.

17. Upon the first assault of every sin, say thus unto thyself. If I now yield and commit this sin, I shall either repeat or not repent. If I do not repent, I am undone; if I do repent, it will cost me incomparably more heart's grief than the pleasure of the sin is worth.

18. Consider, that for that very sin to which thou art now tempted (suppose lying, lust, over-reaching thy brother, &c.), many millions are already damned, and even now burning in hell. And when thy foot is upon the brink, stay and think upon the wages, and know for a truth, that if

thou fallest into that sin, thou art fallen into hell, if God help not out.

19. Never be the bolder to give way unto any wickedness, to exercise thy heart with covetousness, cruelty, ambition, revenge, adulteries, speculative wantonness, uncleanness, or any other solitary sinfulness, because thou art alone, and no mortal eye looks upon thee. For "if thine heart condemn thee, God is greater than thy heart, and knoweth all things;" and will condemn thee much more. If thy conscience be as a thousand witnesses; God, who is the Lord of thy conscience, will be more than a million of witnesses; and thou mayest be assured, howsoever thou blessest thyself in thy secrecy, that what sin soever is now acted in the very retiredst corner of thine heart, or any ways most solitarily by thyself; though in the mean time it be concealed and lie hid in as great darkness as it was committed, until that last and great day, yet then it must most certainly appear, and be as legible on thy forehead as if it were written with the brightest sun-beam upon a wall of crystal. Thou shalt then in the face of heaven and earth be laid out in thy true colours, and without confessing and forsaking while it is called to-day, be before angels, men, and devils, utterly, universally, and everlastingly shamed and confounded.

20. Consider the resolute resistance and mortified resolutions against sin and all enticements thereunto of many, upon whom the sun of the gospel did not shine with such beauty and fulness as it doth upon us; neither were so many heavenly discoveries in the kingdom of Christ made known unto them as our days have seen. For upon our times (which makes our sins a great deal more sinful) hath happily fallen an admirable confluence of the saving light and learning, experience and excellency of all former ages, besides the extraordinary additions of the present, which with a glorious noontide of united illuminations doth abundantly serve our turn for a continued further and fuller illustration of the great mystery of godliness and secrets of sanctification. Hear Chrysostom: "But I think thus, and this will I ever preach, that it is much more bitter to offend Christ than to be tormented in the pains of hell." He that writes the life of Anselm, saith thus of him; "He feared nothing in the world more than to sin. My conscience bearing me witness I lie not; for we have often heard him profess, that if on the one hand he should see corporally the horror of sin, on the other the pains of hell, and must necessarily be plunged into the one, he would choose hell rather than sin. And another thing also no less perhaps

wonderful to some, he was wont to say, that he "would rather have hell, being innocent and free from sin, than polluted with the filth thereof, possess the kingdom of heaven." It is reported of another ancient holy man, that he was wont to say, "he would rather be torn in pieces with wild horses, than wittingly and willingly commit any sin." Jerome, also, in one of his epistles tells a story of a young man of most invincible courage and constancy in the profession of Christ under some of the bloody persecuting emperors, to this purpose. They had little hope, it seems, to conquer him by torture, and therefore they take this course with him. They brought him into most fragrant gardens flowing with all pleasure and delight; there they laid him upon a bed of down, softly enwrapped in a net of silk, amongst the lilies and the roses, the delicious murmur of the streams, and the sweet whistling of the leaves. They all depart, and a beautiful strumpet enters, and useth all the abominable tricks of her impure art to ensnare him. Whereupon the young man, fearing that he should now be conquered by folly, who was conqueror over fury, out of an infinite detestation of sin, bites off a piece of his tongue with his own teeth, and spits it in her face, and so hinders the hurt of sin by the smart of his wound. I might have began with Joseph, who did so bravely and blessedly beat back and trample under his feet the sensual solicitations of his wanton and wicked mistress. He had pleasure and preferment in his eye, which were strongly offered in the temptation; but he well knew that not all the offices and honours in Egypt could take off the guilt of that filth; and therefore he resolved rather to lie in the dust, than rise by sin. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" I might pass along to the mother and seven brethren (2 Mac. vii), who chose rather to pass through horrible tortures and a most cruel death, than to eat swine's flesh against the law; and so I might come down to that noble army of martyrs in Queen Mary's time, who were contented with much patience and resolution to part with all, wife, children, liberty, livelihood, life itself; even to lay it down in the flames, rather than to submit to that man of sin, or to subscribe to any one point of his devilish doctrine.

Thus, as you have heard, I have tendered many reasons to restrain from sin, which by the help of God may serve to take off the edge of the most eager temptation, to cool the heat of the most furious enticement, to embitter the sweetest bait that draws to any sensual delight. Now, my most thirsty desire and earnest entreaty is, that every one into whose hands, by God's providence, this book of mine

shall fall, after the perusal of them would pause awhile, that he may more solemnly vow and resolve that ever hereafter, when he shall be set upon and assaulted by allurements to any sin, he will first have recourse unto these twenty considerations, which I have here recommended unto him to help in such cases; and with a punctual seriousness let them sink into his heart before he proceed and pollute himself. I could be content, if it were pleasing unto God, that these lines which thou now readest were writ with the warmest blood in mine heart, to represent unto thine eye the dear affectionateness of my soul for thy spiritual and eternal good, so that thou wouldst be thoroughly persuaded, and now, before thou pass any further, sincerely promised so to do.

Thirdly. The point may serve to set out the excellency of that high and heavenly art of comforting afflicted consciences. The more dangerous and desperate the wound is, the more doth it magnify and make admirable the mystery and method of the cure and recovery; which, were it well known and wisely practised, what a world of unnecessary slavish torture in troubled minds would it prevent? So many thousands of poor, abused, deluded souls should not perish by the damning flatteries and cruel mercies of unskilful daubers. What a heaven of spiritual lightness and joy might shine in the hearts and show itself in the faces of God's people! Until it please the Lord to move the hearts of my learned and holy brethren in populous cities and great congregations, who must needs have much employment and variety of experience this way; or some special men extraordinarily endowed and exercised herein, to put to their helping hands and furnish the church with more large and exact discourses in this kind;—take in good part this essay of mine.

## SECT. II, PART I.

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### CHAP. I.

The first Error in curing Consciences is the unseasonable applying of Comfort to them that sorrow not at all.

WHEREIN I first desire to discover and rectify some ordinary aberrations about spiritual cures, which fall out when the physician of the soul,—

First, Applies unseasonably the cordials of the gospel and comforts of mercy, when the corrosives of the law and comminations of judgment are convenient and suitable. Were it not absurd in surgery to pour a most sovereign balsam of exquisite composition and inestimable price upon a sound part? It is far more unseemly and senseless, and of an infinitely more pestilent consequence, in any ministerial labours, to proffer the blood of Christ and promises of life to an unwounded conscience, as belonging unto it at present. It is the only right everlasting method “to turn men from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God;” and all the men of God and master-builders, who have ever set themselves sincerely to serve God in their ministry and to save souls, have followed the same course; to wit, first to wound by the law and then to heal by the gospel. We must be humbled in the sight of the Lord, before he lift us up (James iv, 10). We must be sensible of our spiritual blindness and captivity, before we can heartily seek to be savingly enlightened and enlarged from the devil’s slavery, and enriched with grace. There must be sense of misery, before showing of mercy; crying, I am unclean, I am unclean, before opening the fountain for uncleanness; stinging, before curing by the brazen serpent; smart for sin, before a plaister of Christ’s blood; brokenness of heart, before binding up. God himself opened the eyes of our first parents to make them see and be sensible of their sin and misery, nakedness and shame (Gen. iii, 7), before he promised Christ (ver. 15). Christ Jesus tells us that he was anointed by the Lord, “to

preach good tidings ;” but to whom ? to the poor ; to the broken hearted ; to the captives ; to the blind ; to the bruised ( Isa. lxi, 1 ; Luke iv, 18 ) : that “ the whole need not the physician, but they that are sick ; and he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance ” ( Matt. ix, 12, 13 ) ; that is, poor souls, sinners indeed, even in their own estimation ; and not self-conceited pharisees, who though they be mere strangers to any wound of conscience for sin, yet they will not be persuaded that they shall be damned ; but in the mean time contemn and condemn all others in respect of themselves ; sinful publicans as too gross, sincere professors as too godly ; whereas notwithstanding, in true judgment, harlots are in a far happier case than they ( Matt. xxi, 31 ) : that “ he will give rest ;” but to whom ? to those “ that labour and are heavy laden ” ( Matt. xi, 28 ) : that the spirit which he would send, should convince the world, first of sin and then of righteousness ; to wit, of Christ. It is ordinary with the prophets, first to discover the sins of the people, and to denounce judgments ; and then to promise Christ upon their coming in, to enlighten and make them lightsome, with raising their thoughts to a fruitful contemplation of the glory, excellency, and sweetness of his blessed kingdom. Isaiah in his first chapter, from the mouth of God, doth in the first place behave himself like a “ son of thunder,” pressing upon the consciences of those to whom he was sent many heinous sins ; horrible ingratitude, fearful falling away, formality in God’s worship, cruelty, and the like. Afterward ( ver. 16, 17 ), he invites to repentance, and then follows ( verse 18 ), “ Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Nathan, to recover even a regenerate man, convinceth him first soundly of his sin, with much aggravation and terror, and then upon remorse assures him of pardon ( 2 Sam. xii, 13 ).

Consider further for this purpose the sermons of our blessed Saviour himself, who “ taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.” With what power and piercing did our Lord and Master labour to open the eyes, search the hearts, and wound the consciences of his hearers, to fit them for the gospel and his own dear heart’s blood ? See Matt. v, &c. and xxiii and xxv, &c.—Of John Baptist, who by the mightiness of his ministerial spirit, accompanied with extraordinary strength from heaven, did strike through the hearts of those that heard him with such astonishment about their spiritual state, with such horror for their former ways, and fear of future vengeance, that they came unto

him in crowds: "And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?" (Luke iii, 10, 12, 14.)—Of Peter, who being now freshly inspired and illuminated from above with large and extraordinary effusions of the Holy Ghost, shadowed by "cloven fiery tongues" (Acts ii), in the very prime and flower of his ministerial wisdom, bends himself to break the hearts of his hearers. Amongst other piercing passages of his searching sermon, he tells them to their faces (they standing before him stained with the horrible guilt of the dearest blood that ever was shed upon earth, most worthy to have been gathered up by the most glorious angels in vessels of gold), that they had crucified and slain that just and holy One, the Lord of life, Jesus of Nazareth (ver. 23). And again at the conclusion (ver. 36) leaves the same tormenting sting in their consciences, which restlessly wrought and boiled within them until it begot a great deal of compunction, terror, and tearing of their hearts with extreme amazement and anguish. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts" (ver. 37). Whereupon they came crying "unto Peter, and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And so, being seasonably led by the counsel of the apostles to believe on the name of Jesus Christ, to lay hold upon the promise, to repent evangelically, they had the remission of sins sealed unto them by baptism, and were happily received into the number of the saints of God, whose Son they had so lately slaughtered.—Of Paul, who though he stood as a prisoner at the bar, and might perhaps by a general plausible discourse, without piercing or particularizing, have insinuated into the affections and won the favour of his hearers, who were to be his judges, and so made way for his enlargement and particular welfare; yet he, for all this, very resolutely and unreservedly crosseth and opposeth their greedy, lustful, and careless humours with a right searching, terrifying sermon of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (Acts xxiv, 24, 25). That unhappy Felix was a fellow polluted with abominable adultery, and very infamous for his cruel and covetous oppressions, and consequently unapprehensive and fearless of that dreadful tribunal, and the terrors to come. Whereupon Paul, having learned in the school of Christ not to fear any mortal man in the discharge of his ministry, draws the sword of the Spirit with undauntedness of spirit, and strikes presently at the very face of those fearful sins, which reigned in his principal and

most eminent hearers ; though he stood now before them in bonds at their mercy. He shrewdly galls the conscience of that great man, by opposing righteousness to his bribing cruelties, temperance to his adulterous impurities, the dreadfulfulness of judgment to come to his insolent lawless outrages and desperate security. Had Paul endeavoured to have satisfied their curiosities, as many a temporizing preacher would have done very industriously, and to entertain the time with a general discourse of the wonderful birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ, now so much talked of abroad in the world, with a pleasing discovery only of the many mercies, pardons, and glorious things purchased to the sons of men by his bloodshed : not meddling at all with their beloved delights of filthy lust and other sins ; oh, then they had listened unto him with much acceptation and delight ; all things had been carried fair and favourably ; Paul had not been interrupted and so suddenly silent ; nor Felix so frightened and distempered. But this man of God knew full well that that was not the way ; neither best for them, nor for his Master's honour, nor for the comfort of his own conscience ; and therefore he takes a course to cause the tyrant to tremble, that thereby he might either be fitted for Christ, which was best of all, or at least made inexcusable ; but howsoever, that in so doing his duty might be discharged and his soul delivered ; holding it far better that his body should be in bonds than his soul guilty of blood.

Orthodox antiquity was of the same mind, and for the same method.

Austin, that famous disputer in his time, counselleth to this purpose in this point\* (I express the sense and sum, and no more than may be collected and concluded from the place. I will never confine myself grammatically and pedantically to the words precisely, and render verbatim, save only in some cases, as of controversy, or some other such-like necessity of more punctual quotation). "The conscience is not to be healed if it be not wounded. Thou preachest and pressest the law, comminations, the judgment to come, and that with much earnestness and importunity. He who hears, if he be not terrified, if he be not troubled, is not to be comforted. Another hears, is stirred, is stung, grieves extremely : cure his contritions ; because he is cast down and confounded in himself."

"After that John Baptist," saith Chrysostom †, "had thoroughly frightened the minds of his hearers with the terror of judgment and expectation of torment ; and with the name

\* On Psalm lix.

† On Matt. iii, Hom. 11.

of an axe, and their rejection, and entertainment of other children, and by doubling the punishment, to wit, of being hewed down and cast into the fire: when he had thus every way tamed and taken down their stubbornness, and from fear of so many evils had stirred them up to a desire of deliverance, then at length he makes mention of Christ."

"God pours not the oil of his mercy," saith Bernard, "save into a broken vessel."

So also all our modern divines, who are instructed unto the kingdom of heaven.

Peter Martyr \* magnifies Nathan's method of preaching, and commends it to all the ministers of God. He first proposeth a parable, as we do doctrines, for the illumination and conviction of the understanding. Then he applies it more particularly, and to the present case, where he doth notably expose and aggravate the sin by recounting and opposing God's extraordinary bounty and most merciful dealing with David, by the cause of it, contempt of the Lord's commandment, and dreadful things ensuing thence. Afterward, that he might strike the heart through with astonishment and dread, he threatens terribly. At last, upon compunction, and crying "I have sinned," he sweetly comforteth and raiseth to the assurance of God's favour again.

If this course must be taken with relapsed Christians; why not much more with those who are "dead in trespasses and sins?"

"Christ is promised to them alone," saith Calvin †, "who are humbled and confounded with a sense of their own sins."

"Then is Christ seasonably revealed," saith Musculus ‡, "when the hearts of men being soundly pierced by preaching repentance, are possessed with a desire of his gracious righteousness."

"The way to faith," saith Beza §, "is penitence (legal compunction); because sickness enforceth men, however unwilling, to fly unto the physician."

"Men are ever to be prepared for the gospel by the preaching of the law ¶."

"A sermon of the law," said Tilenus, while he was yet orthodox ¶¶, "must go before the doctrine of the gospel, that the oil of mercy may be poured into a contrite vessel."

"In our exhortations to follow Christ," saith Rolloc \*\*, "the minds of men are ever to be prepared with a sense of

\* On 2 Sam. xii.

† On Isa. lxi.

‡ On Matt. iii.

§ On Matt. xxi, 32.

¶ Ibid. on 2 Cor. iii, 11.

¶¶ Syntag. Theol. p. 2, c. xlv.

\*\* On John viii.

misery and their dark estate : and afterward with a desire of enlargement and light."

"It is the care of those ministers which divide God's word aright," say our great divines of Great Britain\*, first fitly and wisely to wound the consciences of their hearers with the terrors of the law, and after to raise them by the promise of the gospel, &c."—"The Spirit first terrifies those who are to be justified with the law; breaking and humbling them with threats, scourges, and lashes of conscience, that thereby despairing of themselves they may fly unto Christ †."

"We cannot learn out of the gospel," saith Chemnitius ‡, that we are to be blessed in Christ, except by an antithesis, as Luther speaks, we also acknowledge that we are accursed by the law."

"The doctrine of the law," saith Davenant §, "is to be propounded to the impious and impenitent, to strike terror into their hearts, and to demonstrate their just damnation, except they repent and fly to Jesus Christ."

Perkins, that great light of our church, both for soundness of learning, sincerity of judgment, and insight into the mystery of Christ, teaching how repentance is wrought, tells us||, that "first of all a man must have knowledge of four things. Of the law of God; of sin against the law; of the guilt of sin; and of the judgment of God against sin, which is his eternal wrath. In the second place must follow an application of the former knowledge to a man's self, by the work of the conscience assisted by the Holy Ghost (which for that cause is called the spirit of bondage, Rom. viii, 15), in this manner:—

"The breaker of the law is guilty of eternal wrath, saith the mind; but I am a breaker of the law of God, saith the conscience, as a witness and an accuser: therefore I am guilty of eternal death, saith the same conscience as a judge.

"Every liar shall have his part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone (Rev. xxi, 8); but I am a liar; therefore I shall have my part in that everlasting fiery lake."

And so of other sins: Covetousness, cruelty, drunkenness, lewdness, swearing, defrauding, temporizing, usury, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting (Ephes. v, 4), revelling (Gal. v, 21), profaning the Lord's day, strange apparel, (Zeph. i, 8), and innumerable sins more, which being all

\* Theologorum Mag. Britan., &c. † Paraphrase on Rom. viii.

‡ Harmo. Evang. cap. lxxiii. § On Col. i.

|| Of the Nature and Practice of Repentance, chap. iii.

severally pressed upon the heart by a discourse of the guilty conscience, as I have said, must needs full sorely crush it with many cutting conclusions; from which, set on by the "spirit of bondage," is wont to arise much trouble of mind, which, saith he, is commonly called "the sting of the conscience, or penitence, and the compunction of heart" (Acts ii, 37); and then succeeds seasonably and comfortably the work of the gospel. The soul being thus sensible of, and groaning under the burthen of all sin, is happily fitted for all the glorious revelations of the abundant riches of God's dearest mercies (See Isa. lvii, 15; Matt. xi, 28; and ix, 13); for all the comforts, graces, and favours which shine from the face of Christ; for all the expiations, refreshings, and exultations, which spring out of that blessed "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. xiii, 1).

"Never any of God's children," saith Greenham\*, "were comforted thoroughly, but they were first humbled for their sins."

"The course warranted unto us by the Scriptures," saith Hieron †, "is this: First, to endeavour the softening of our hearers' hearts, by bringing them to the sight and sense of their own wretchedness, before we adventure to apply the riches of God's mercy in Christ Jesus. The preaching of the gospel is compared by our Saviour himself unto the sowing of seed (Matt. xiii): as therefore the ground is first torn up with the plough before the seed be committed unto it; so the fallow ground of our hearts must first be broken up with the sharpness of the law (Jerem. iv, 3), and the very terror of the Lord, before we can be fit to entertain the sweet seed of the gospel. I would have a preacher to preach peace, and to aim at nothing more than the comfort of the souls of God's people (2 Cor. v, 11); yet I would have him withal frame his course to the manner of God's appearing to Elijah. The text saith, that first a mighty strong wind rent the mountains and brake the rocks, then after that came an earthquake, and after the earthquake came fire; and, after all these, then came a still and a soft voice (2 Kings xix, 11, 12). After the same manner I would not have the still and mild voice of the gospel come, till the strong tempest of the law hath rent the stony hearts of men and made them to tremble, and rottenness to enter into their bones (Habak. iii, 16), or at least, because our auditories are mixed, consisting of men of divers humours, it will be good for him to deliver his

\* Of Repentance, Sermon 7.

† The Preacher's Plea.

doctrine with such caution, that neither the humble souls may be affrighted with the severity of God's judgments, nor the profane and unrepentant grow presumptuous by the abundance of God's mercy. The person that is full despiseth the honeycomb, saith Solomon (Prov. xxvii, 7). And what doth a proud Pharisee, or a churlish Nabal, or a politic Gallio, or a scoffing Ishmael, care to hear of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God in his son Jesus? (Ephes. iii, 18) except it be to settle them faster upon their lees. Doctrine of that nature is as unfitting such uncircumcised ears (Acts vii, 51) as the snow the summer, and the rain the harvest. Unto the horse belongs a whip, to the ass a bridle, and a rod to the fool's back, &c (Prov. xxvi, 1, 3). He that intendeth to do any good in this frozen generation, had need rather to be Boanerges, one of the sons of thunder (Mark iii, 17), than Bar-Jonah, the son of a dove."

"The word of God," saith Forbes\*, "hath three degrees of operation in the hearts of men. For, first, it falleth to men's ears as the sound of many waters, a mighty, great, and confused sound, and which commonly bringeth neither terror nor joy, but yet a wondering and acknowledgment, of a strange force, and more than human power. This is that effect which many felt on hearing Christ, when they were astonished at his doctrine, as teaching with authority. "What manner of doctrine is this?" "Never man spake like this man" (Mark i, 22, 27; Luke iv, 32; John vii, 46). This effect falleth even to the reprobate (Habak. i, 5; Acts xiii, 41). The next effect is the voice of thunder; which bringeth not only wonder but fear also; not only filleth the ears with sound and the heart with astonishment, but moreover shaketh and terrifieth the conscience. And this second effect may also befall a reprobate, as Felix (Acts xxiv, 25). The third effect is proper to the elect, the sound of harping, while the word not only ravisheth with admiration and striketh the conscience with terror, but also, lastly, filleth it with sweet peace and joy, &c. Now albeit the first two degrees may be without the last; yet none feel the last, who have not in some degree felt both the first two."

"God healeth none," saith Gouge†, "but such as are first wounded. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick (Matt. ix, 12). Christ was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, &c. (Luke iv, 18)."

\* In his Commentary upon Rev. xiv.      † The whole Armour of God.

*Obj.* Many have believed who never grieved for their misery, as Lydia, &c (Acts xvi, 14).

*Ans.* Who can tell that these grieved not? It followeth not that they had no grief, because none is recorded. All particular actions and circumstances of actions are not recorded. It is enough that the grief of some, as of the Jews, of the jailor, of the woman that washed Christ's feet with her tears, and of others, is recorded (Acts ii, 37; xvi, 29; Luke vii, 38). Lydia might be prepared before she heard Paul; for she accompanied them which went out to pray, and she worshipped God (Acts xvi, 13, 14); or else her heart might be touched when she heard Paul preach. The like may be said of those who heard Peter when he preached to Cornelius; and of others (Acts x, 44, 45). Certain it is that a man must both see and feel his wretchedness, and be wounded in soul for it, before faith can be wrought in him. Yet I deny not but there may be great difference in the manner and measure of grieving," &c.

"The heart is prepared for faith, and not by faith. Justification being the work of God is perfect in itself, but our hearts are not fit to apply it until God have humbled us, and brought us to despair in ourselves. The whole preparation being legal, wrought by the Spirit of bondage to bring us to the spirit of adoption (Rom. viii, 15), leaves us in despair of all help, either of ourselves or the whole world, that so being in this woful plight we might now submit ourselves to God, who, infusing a lively faith into our hearts, gives us his Son, and our justification with him\*."

"None ever had conscience truly pacified, that first felt not conscience wounded †."

"The preparations to repentance" (evangelical) "are those legal fits of fear and terror, which are, both in nature and time too, before faith ‡." "As there can be no birth without the pains of travail going before, so neither no true repentance without some terrors of the law, and straits of conscience. The reason is plain. None can have repentance, but such as Christ calls to repentance. Now he calls only sinners to repentance (Mat. ix, 13), even sinners heavy laden with the sense of God's wrath against sin (Mat. xi, 28). He comes only to save the lost sheep, that is, such sheep as feel themselves lost in themselves, and know not how to find the way to the fold. It is said, Rom. viii, 15, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage

\* Yates. Of Mr. Montague's error against the Simplicity of God's Will, chap. i, sec. 5.

† Sclater, The sick Soul's salve. ‡ Dike on Repentance, chap. i.

again to fear,' which shows that once they did receive it, namely, in the very first preparation unto conversion; that then the Spirit of God in the law did so bear witness unto them of their bondage and miserable slavery, that it made them to tremble. Now there, under the person of the Romans, the apostle speaks to all believers, and so shows that it is every Christian's common case\*."

"The law hath its use to work *μεταμελείαν, penitentiam*; the gospel its force to work *μετανοΐαν, resipiscentiam*; and both are needful for Christians even at this present, as formerly they have ever been †."

"God's mercy may not be such whereby his truth in any sort should be impeached, as it should if it be prostituted indifferently and promiscuously to all, as well the insolent and impenitent, as the poor, humble, and broken-hearted sinner. For unto these latter only is the promise of mercy made. And if to others the gate of mercy should be set open, God's mercies (as Solomon saith of the wicked's, that they are cruel mercies) should be false and unjust mercies. But God never yet learned so to be merciful as to make himself false and unfaithful. The first thing that draws unto Christ is to consider our miserable estate without him. Therefore we see that the law drives men to Christ; and the law doth it by showing a man his sin, and the curse due unto the same. We must know, that nothing performed of us can give satisfaction in this matter of humiliation. Yet it is a thing without which we cannot come to Christ: it is as much as if a man should say, the physician is ready to heal thee, but then it is required that thou must have a sense of the disease, &c. No man will come to Christ except he be hungry. Only those that are troubled receive the Gospel.

"No man will take Christ for his husband, till he come to know and feel the weight of Satan's yoke. Till that time he will never come to take upon him the yoke of Christ.

"To all you I speak that are humbled. Others, that mind not this doctrine, regard not the things of this nature; but you that mourn in Zion, that are broken-hearted; you that know the bitterness of sin, to you is this salvation sent ‡."

"Under the causes I comprehend all that work of God whereby he worketh faith in any, which standeth especially in these three things:—

\* Ibid. chap. ii.

† Hinde, of the Office and Use of the Moral Law of God in the Days of the Gospel.

‡ Dike, of the Deceitfulness of Man's Heart, chap. xv.

“ 1. That God by his word and Spirit first enlighteneth the understanding, truly to conceive the doctrine of man’s misery, and of his full recovery by Christ.

“ 2. By the same means he worketh in his heart both such sound sorrow for his misery, and fervent desire after Christ the remedy, that he can never be at quiet till he enjoy Christ.

“ 3. God so manifesteth his love in freely offering Christ with all his benefits to him, a poor sinner, that thereby he draws him so to give credit to God therein, that he gladly accepts Christ offered unto him.

“ These three works of God, whosoever findeth to have been wrought in himself, he may thereby know certainly he hath faith; but without these, what change of life soever may be conceived, there can be no certainty of faith\*.”

“ The law first breaks us and kills us with the sight and guilt of sin, before Christ cures us and binds us up.

“ The Holy Ghost worketh and maketh faith effectual by these three acts :—

“ First, it puts an efficacy into the law, and makes that powerful to work on the heart; to make a man poor in spirit, so that he may be fit to receive the gospel. The spirit of bondage must make the law effectual, as the spirit of adoption doth the gospel, &c.

“ The second work is to reveal Christ when the heart is prepared by the Spirit in the first work; then in the next place he shows the unsearchable riches of Christ, what is the hope of his calling and the glorious inheritance prepared for the saints, what is the exceeding greatness of his power in them that believe. I say we need the Spirit to show these things, &c.

“ The third act of the Spirit is the testimony which he gives to our spirit, in telling us that these things are ours. When the heart is prepared by the law, and when these things are so showed unto us that we prize them and long after them, yet there must be a third thing: to take them to ourselves, to believe they are ours: and there needs a work of the Spirit for this. For though the promises be never so clear, yet having nothing but the promises, you will never be able to apply them to yourselves. But when the Holy Ghost shall say, Christ is thine; all these things belong to thee, and God is thy Father; when that shall witness to our spirit by a work of his own, then shall we believe, &c.†”

“ This is the order observed in our justification: First,

\* Calverwell, in his Treatise of Faith.

† Throgmorton, in his Treatise of Faith.

there is a sight of our misery, to which we are brought by the law. Secondly, there is by the gospel a holding forth of Christ, as our redemption from sin and death. Thirdly, there is a working of faith in the heart to rest on Christ as the ransom from sin and death. Now when a man is come hither, he is truly and really just\*.”

“We teach, that in true conversion a man must be wounded in his conscience by the sense of his sins. His contrition must be pungent and vehement, bruising, breaking, rending the heart, and feeling the pains (as a woman labouring of child) before the new creature be brought forth, or Christ truly formed in him. It is not done without bitterness of the soul, without care, indignation, revenge (2 Cor. vii, 11). But as some infants are born with less pain to the mother, and some with more; so may the new man be regenerated in some with more, in some with less anxiety of travail. But surely grace is not infused into the heart of any sinner, except there be at least so great affliction of spirit for sin foregoing that he cannot but feel it,” &c.†

“This bruising is required before conversion. 1. That so the Spirit may make way for itself into the heart by levelling all proud high thoughts, &c. 2. To make us set a high price upon Christ’s death.—This is the cause of relapses and apostasies, because men never smarted for sin at the first. They were not long enough under the lash of the law. Hence this inferior work of the Spirit in bringing down high thoughts is necessary before conversion‡.”

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## CHAP. II.

Daubers reprehended. Faithfulness in preaching and Daubing compared.

By this time it doth most clearly and plentifully appear what a foul and fearful fault it is, for men, either in the managing of their public ministry, or in their more private conferences, visitations of the sick, consultations about a good estate to God-ward, and other occasions of like nature, to apply Jesus Christ and the promises, to promise life and safety in the evil day, to souls as yet not soundly enlightened and afflicted with sight of sin and sense of God’s wrath; to consciences never truly wounded and awakened.

\* Baine, in his Sermon upon John iii, 16.

† Cade, in his Justification of the Church of England, lib. 1, cap. v sec. 1.

‡ Sibbs, in his Bruised Reed.

I insisted the longer upon this point, because I know it full well to be a most universal and prevailing policy of the devil, whereby he keeps many thousands in his cursed slavery, and from salvation, to confirm as many pastors as he can possibly, willing enough to drive their flocks before them to perdition in an ignorant or affected prejudice, and forbearance of that saving method of bringing souls out of hell, mentioned before, and made good with much variety of evidence; and to nourish also in the hearts of natural men a strong and sturdy dislike, opposition, and raging against downright dealing and those men of God (sufficient, as they say, but falsely and against their own souls, by their terrible teaching to drive their hearers to distraction, self-destruction, or despair) who take the only right course to convert them and to bring them to Jesus Christ as he himself invites them, to wit, "labouring and heavy laden" with their sins (Matt. xi, 28).

Daubers, then, who serve Satan's craft in this kind, and all those who dispense their ministry without all spiritual discretion and good conscience, of whom there are too many, as great strangers to the right way of working grace in others as to the work of grace in themselves; I say, they are a generation of dangerous men; adepts in an accursed art of conducting poor blinded souls merrily towards everlasting misery, and setting them down in the very midst of hell, before they be sensible of any danger, or discovery of their perilous state. Great men they are with the men of this world, with all those wise fools and sensual great ones, who are not willing to be tormented before their time, or rather who desire impossibly to live the life of pleasures now, and yet at last to "die the death of the righteous." They have still ready at hand mercy and pardon, heaven and salvation for all comers, and all that come near, without so much as a desire to put any difference, or to divide the precious from the vile, which is a prodigiously arrogant folly, pernicious in the highest degree both to their own souls and those they delude. Hear how they are branded in the Book of God, calling them, "pillow-sewers" under men's elbows (Ezek. xiii, 18); that being laid soft and locked fast in the cradle of security, they may sink suddenly into the pit of destruction before they be aware. "Criers of Peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jer. vi, 14), but horrible stirs; tumbling of garments in blood; burning and devouring of fire; "men-pleasers" (Gal. i, 10), who choose rather to tickle the itching ears of their carnal hearers with some frothy, friar-like conceits, and so smooth great ones in their humours

by their cowardly flatteries (especially if they any ways depend upon them for maintenance, rising, and preferment); rather than conscientiously to discharge that trust laid upon them by their great Lord and Master in heaven, upon answerableness for the blood of those souls which shall perish by their temporizing silence and flattering unfaithfulness. Healers of the hurt of their hearers with sweet words (Jer. vi, 14), while their souls are bleeding by the wounds of sin unto eternal death. Preachers of smooth things (Isa. xxx, 10); which kind of men, the greatest part, and all worldlings, wonderfully affect and applaud, though to their own everlasting undoing. They swell under such teachers with a pharisaical conceit that they are as safe for salvation as the precisest of them all. But, alas! their hope is but like a hollow wall, which being put to any stress when the tempest of God's searching wrath begins to shake it, in the time of a final trial of its truth and soundness, it shatters into pieces and comes to nought. Hear the prophet: "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things; prophecy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon; therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit" (Isa. xxx, 8—14). "Daubers with untempered mortar" (Ezek. xiii, 11), who erect in the conceits of those who are willing to be deluded by them (pharisees at the best) a rotten building of false hope, like a "mud-wall without straw, or mortar made only of sand without lime to bind it," which in fair weather makes a fair show for a while; but when abundance of rain falls and winter comes, it moulders away and turns to mire in the streets. Their vain-confidence in prosperous times, before it come to the touchstone of the fiery trial by God's searching truth, may seem current; but in the tempest of God's wrath, when the stormy winter's night of death approacheth, or at furthest at the judgment-seat of the just

and highest God, it proves to be counterfeit ; when at the last they shall cry " Lord, Lord," like the foolish virgins, and those Mat. vii, instead of imaginary comfort they shall be crushed with horrible and everlasting confusion. Hear the prophet : " Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall : there shall be an overflowing shower, and ye, O great hail-stones, shall fall, and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it ? Therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury ; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hail-stones in my fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof : and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it ; to wit, the prophets of Israel, which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xiii, 11—16). Such as " with lies make the heart of the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad ; and strengthen the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life" (ver. 22) ; these fellows hold, and would persuade mere civil men, that their estate is sound enough to God-ward, whatsoever the purer and preciser brethren prate to the contrary ; and yet the Holy Ghost tells us, that " without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii, 14 :—That formal professors are very forward men ; whereas Jesus Christ professeth that he will " spew the lukewarm out of his mouth :"—Nay, and if there be talk even of a good fellow, especially of some more commendable natural parts and plausible carriage ; if he be so but moderately, if I may so speak, and not every day drunk ; Well, well, will they say, we have all our faults, and that is his. But as concerning the faithful servant of God, they are wont to entertain the same thought of him which Ahab did of Elijah, that " he was a troubler of Israel ;" which one of the captains had of the prophet sent to anoint Jehu, that he was a mad fellow ; which the false prophets had of Micaiah, that he was a fellow of a singular and odd humour by himself, and guided by a private spirit of his own ; which Tertullus had of Paul, that he was a pestilent fellow ;

which the Pharisees had of Christ's followers, that they were a contemptible and cursed generation, a company of base, rude, illiterate underlings. Nay, sometimes when the mad fit is upon them, they will not stick to charge God's people in some proportion most wickedly and falsely, as the ancient heathens did the primitive Christians — with conventicles and meetings of hateful impurities, faction, disaffection to Cesar, and many other horrible things; whereas, poor souls, they were most innocent, and infinitely abhorred all such villanies; and they met in the morning, even before day, not to do, God knows, any such ill, but for the service of God (even their most ingenious adversaries being witnesses), to sing praises to Christ. God, to confirm their discipline, forbidding all manner of sin, &c.;—with all the miscarriages, miseries, and calamities that fell upon the state, as though they were the causes. Whereas those few neglected ones which truly serve God are the only men in all places where they live to make up the hedge, and to stand in the gap against the threatened inundations of God's dreadful wrath; and all the opposites to their holy profession are the real enemies of kingdoms, able by their dissoluteness and disgracing godliness to dissolve the sinews of the strongest state upon earth. Look upon Amos iv, 1, 2, and there you shall find who they are which cause God to enter a controversy with the inhabitants of a land.

Hear how Austin describes some of these self-seeking and soul-murdering daubers in his days: "Far be it from us," saith he, "that we should say unto you, live as you list, do not trouble yourselves, God will cast away none, only hold the Christian faith. He will not destroy that which he hath redeemed, he will not destroy those for whom he hath shed his blood; and if you please to recreate yourselves at plays, you may go; what hurt is there in it? And you may go to those feasts which are kept in all towns by jovial companions, making themselves merry, as they suppose, at these public meetings, but indeed rather making themselves most miserable; I say you may go and be jovial, God's mercy is great and may pardon all. Crown yourselves with roses before they wither. You may fill yourselves with good cheer and wine amongst your good-fellow companions; for the creature is given unto us for that purpose, that we may enjoy it.—If we say these things, peradventure we shall have greater multitudes applaud and adhere unto our doctrine. And if there be some, which think, that speaking these things we are not well advised, we offend but a few, and those precise ones; but we win

thereby a world of people. But if we shall thus do, speaking not the words of God, not the words of Christ, but our own; we shall be pastors feeding ourselves, not our flock\*.”

The author of the imperfect commentary in Chrysostom, sorted by somebody into homilies upon Matthew, seems to intimate, that the cause of the overflowing and rankness of iniquity is the baseness of these self-preaching men-pleasers. “Take this fault from the clergy,” saith he, “to wit, that they be not men-pleasers, and all sins are easily cut down;” but if they blunt the edge of the sword of the Spirit with daubing, flattery, temporizing; or strike with it in a scabbard garishly and gaudily embroidered with variety of human learning, tricks of wit, friar-like conceits, &c., it cannot possibly cut to any purpose; it kills the soul, but not the sin. They are the only men, howsoever worldly wisdom rave, and unsanctified learning be beside itself, to beat down sin, batter the bulwarks of the devil, and build up the kingdom of Christ, who, setting aside all private ends and bye-respects, all vain-glorious, covetous, and ambitious aims; all serving the times, projects for preferment, hope of rising, fear of the face of man, &c. address themselves with faithfulness and zeal to the work of the Lord, seeking sincerely to glorify him in converting men’s souls “by the foolishness of that preaching,” which God hath sanctified “to save them that believe,” in a word, who labour to imitate their Lord and Master Jesus Christ and his blessed apostles in teaching “as men having authority;” in “demonstration of the Spirit and power, and not as the scribes.” By embroidered scabbard, I mean the very same which King James not long before his death did most truly out of his deep and excellent wisdom conceive to be the bane of this kingdom; to wit, “a light, affected, and unprofitable kind of preaching, which hath been of late years taken up in court, university, city, and country.” Hear something more largely what reason led his royal judgment to this resolution, and desire of reformation:—

“His Majesty being much troubled and grieved at the heart to hear every day of so many defections from our religion, both to popery and anabaptism, or other points of separation, in some parts of this kingdom; and considering with much admiration what might be the cause thereof, especially in the reign of such a king, who doth so constantly profess himself an open adversary to the superstition of the one, and madness of the other; his princely wisdom could fall upon no one greater probability, than the light-

\* Lib. de Pastoribus, tom. ix.

ness, affectedness, and unprofitableness of that kind of preaching, which hath been of late years too much taken up in court, university, city, and country. The usual scope of very many preachers is noted to be a soaring up in points of divinity, too deep for the capacity of the people; or a mustering up of much reading, or a displaying of their own wits, &c. Now the people bred up with this kind of teaching, and never instructed in the catechism and fundamental grounds of religion, are for all this airy nourishment no better than *abrasæ tabulæ*, mere table books, ready to be filled up, either with the manuals and catechisms of the popish priests, or the papers and pamphlets of anabaptists\*,” &c.

In another place he resembles with admirable fitness the unprofitable pomp and painting of such self-seeking discourses, patched together, and stuffed with a vain-glorious variety of human allegations, “to the red and blue flowers that pester the corn, when it stands in the field; where they are more noisome to the growing crop than beautiful to the beholding eye”—they are King James’s own words†; whereupon a little after he tells the Cardinal, that “it was no decorum to enter the stage with a Pericles in his mouth, but with the sacred name of God. Nor should his lordship,” saith his Majesty, “have marshalled the passage of a royal prophet and poet, after the example of a heathen orator.”

These things being so, how pestilent is the art of spiritual daubing! What miserable men are men-pleasers, who being appointed to help men’s souls out of hell, carry them headlong and hoodwinked by their unfaithfulness and flatteries towards everlasting misery? Oh, how much better were it, and comfortable for every man that enters upon and undertakes that most weighty and dreadful charge of the ministry, a burthen, as some of the ancients elegantly amplify it, able to make the shoulders of the most mighty angel in heaven to shrink under it, to tread in the steps of blessed Paul, by using “no flattering words, nor a cloak of covetousness, nor seeking glory of men; but preaching in season and out of season; not as the scribes, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power; keeping nothing back that is profitable, declaring unto their hearers all the counsel of God;” holding the spiritual children which God hath given them, their “glory, joy, and crown of rejoicing; still watching for the souls of their flock, as they that must give

\* King James. The reasons of the King’s directions for Preaching and Preachers, as I received them from the hand of a public register.

† In the Preface to his Remonstrance against an Oration of Cardinal Perron.

account" (Heb. xiii, 17); the terror of which place, Chrysostom professeth, made his heart to tremble;—I say, by such holy and heavenly behaviour as this, in their ministry, to be able at least to say with him in sincerity, not without unspeakable comfort; "I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men!" (Acts xx, 26.) Let us be moved to this course and frightened from the contrary by consideration of the different effects and consequences of plain dealing and daubing, in respect of comfort or confusion. Faithfulness this way,—

1. Begets those which belong unto God to grace and new obedience. See Peter's piercing sermon, Acts ii, 14—36.

2. Recovers those Christians which are fallen, by remorse and repentance, to their former forwardness and first love. See Nathan's downright dealing with David, 2 Sam. xii, 7—13.

3. Makes those which will not be reformed inexcusable. See Paul's Sermon to Felix, Acts xxiv, 25. How strangely will this man be confounded, and more than utterly without all excuse, when he shall meet Paul at that great day before the highest Judge!

4. It is very pleasing and profitable to upright-hearted men, and all such as happily hold on in a constant and comfortable course of Christianity. "Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" (Micah ii, 7.) It makes them still more humble, zealous, watchful, heavenly-minded, &c.

5. Hardens the rebellious and contumacious. See Isa. vi. In which faithful ministers are also "unto God a sweet savour of Christ" (2 Cor. ii, 15).

6. And the man of God himself shall hereafter blessedly "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever;" and all those happy ones which he hath pulled out of hell by his downright dealing, shall reign and rejoice with him in unknown and unspeakable bliss through all eternity.

But now on the other side, the effects of daubing and men-pleasing are most accursed and pestilent in many respects.

1. In respect of God's word and messages: First, not dividing it and dispensing them aright. Secondly, dishonouring the majesty and weakening the power of them many times with the unprofitable mixture of human allegations, ostentations of wit, fine friar-like conceits, &c. Even as we may see at harvest time a land of good corn quite choked up with red, blue, and yellow flowers, as King James doth excellently allude in the forecited place. Thirdly,

fearful profaning them by misapplication against God's will, "making the heart of the righteous sad, whom God would not have made sad : and strengthening the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life" (Ezek. xiii, 22). Fourthly, villanous perverting and abusing them to their own advantage, applause, rising, revenge, and such other private ends.

2. In respect of the flattering and unfaithful ministers themselves. First, extreme vileness (Isa. ix, 15). Secondly, guiltiness of spiritual bloodshed (Ezek. iii, 18). Thirdly, liableness to the fierce wrath of God in the day of visitation (Jer. xiv, 15 ; 1 Kings xxii, 25).

3. In respect of their hearers, who delight in their lies, in their smooth and silken sermons ; sudden, horrible, and unavoidable confusion (Isa. xxx, 13, 14).

4. Burning both together in hell for ever without timely and true repentance, cursing there each other continually, and crying with mutual hideous yellings, "O thou destroyer of our souls, hadst thou been faithful in thy ministry, we had escaped these eternal flames !" — "O miserable man that I am ! Wo is me that ever I was minister ; for now, besides the horror due unto the guiltiness of mine own undone soul, I have drawn upon me by my unfaithful dealing the cry of the blood of all those souls who have perished under my ministry, to the everlasting enraging of my already intolerable torment."

Give me leave to conclude this point with that pathetical and zealous passage of reverend and learned Greenham against negligent pastors, amongst whom I may justly rank and reckon all daubers and men-pleasers ; for self-preachers are for the most part seldom-preachers. Hear his words : —

"Were there any love of God from their hearts in those, who, instead of feeding to salvation, starve many thousands to destruction ; I dare say, and say it boldly, that for all the promotions under heaven they would not offer that injury to one soul, that now they offer to many hundred souls. But, Lord, how do they think to give up their reckoning to thee, who in most strict account wilt take the answer of every soul committed unto them one by one ! Or with what concern do they often hear that vehement speech of our Saviour Christ, Feed, feed, feed ! With what eyes do they so often read that piercing speech of the apostle, Feed the flock committed unto you ! But if none of these will move them, then the Lord open their eyes to hear the grievous groans of many souls lying under the grisly altars of destruction, and complaining against them ; 'O Lord, the revenger of blood, behold these men whom thou hast set

over us to give us the bread of life, but they have not given it us. Our tongues and the tongues of our children have stuck to the roof of our mouths for calling and crying, and they would not take pity on us. We have given them the tenths which thou appointedst us, but they have not given us thy truth which thou hast commanded them. Reward them, O Lord, as they have rewarded us. Let the bread between their teeth turn to rottenness in the bowels. Let them be clothed with shame and confusion of face as with a garment. Let their wealth, as the dung from the earth, be swept away by their executors; and upon their gold and silver, which they have falsely treasured up, let continually be written, The price of blood, the price of blood; for it is the value of our blood, O Lord. If thou didst hear the blood of Abel, being but one man, forget not the blood of many, when thou goest into judgment \*.”

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### CHAP. III.

A general Direction for avoiding the former Error.

I now return to rectify and tender a remedy against the first aberration, which I told you was this: When mercy, Christ, the promises, salvation, heaven, and all are applied hand over head, and falsely appropriated to unhumiliated sinners, whose souls were never rightly enlightened with sight of sin and weight of God's wrath, nor afflicted to any purpose with any legal wound or hearty compunction by the spirit of bondage; in whose hearts a sense of their spiritual misery and want hath not yet raised a restless and kindly thirst after Jesus Christ; in this case my advice is, that all those who deal with others about their spiritual states, and undertake to direct in that high and weighty affair of men's salvation, either publicly or privately, in their ministry, visitations of the sick, or otherwise; that they would follow that course of which I largely discoursed a little before, taken by God himself, his prophets, his Son, the apostles, and all those men of God in all ages who have set themselves with sincerity, faithfulness, and all good conscience to seek God's glory in the salvation of men's souls, to discharge aright their dreadful charge, and "to keep themselves pure from the blood of all men;" to wit, that they labour with all earnestness, in the first place, by the knowledge, power, and application of the law, to enlighten, convince, and

\* Godly Observations, concerning divers Arguments and Common Places in Religion, chap. xiii.

terrify those that they have to do with, concerning conversion, with a sensible, particular apprehension and acknowledgment of their wretchedness and miserable estate, by reason of their sinfulness and cursedness; to break their hearts, bruise their spirits, humble their souls, wound and awake their consciences; to bring them by all means to that legal astonishment, trouble of mind, and melting temper, which the ministry of John Baptist, Paul, and Peter wrought upon the hearts of their hearers (Luke iii, 10, 12, 14; Acts ii, 37; xvi, 30), that they may come crying feelingly and from the heart to those men of God who happily fastened these keen arrows of compunction and remorse in the sides of their consciences; and say, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Sirs, what must we do to be saved?" As if they should have said, Alas! we see now we have been in hell all this while; and if we had gone on a little longer, we had most certainly lain for ever in the fiery lake. The devil and our own lusts were carrying us hoodwinked and headlong towards endless perdition. Who would have thought we had been such abominable beasts and abhorred creatures as your ministry hath made us, and in so forlorn and woful estate? Now, you blessed men of God, help us out of this gulf of spiritual confusion, or we are lost everlastingly. By your discovery of our present sinful and cursed estate, we feel our hearts torn in pieces with extreme and restless anguish, as though many fiery scorpions' stings stuck fast in them. Either lead us to the sight of that blessed antitype of the brazen serpent to cool and allay the boiling rage of our guilty wounds, or we are utterly undone. Either bring us to the blood of that just and holy One, which with execrable villany we have spilt as water upon the ground, that it may bind up our broken hearts, or they will presently burst with despair and bleed to eternal death. Give us to drink of that sovereign fountain opened by the hand of mercy for all thirsty souls, or else we die. There is nothing you can prescribe and appoint, but we will most willingly do. We will with all our hearts "pluck out our right eyes, cut off our right hands;" we mean, part with our beloved lusts and dearest sinful pleasures; abominate and abandon them all for ever, from the heart root to the pit of hell. If we can be rid of the devil's fetters, welcome shall be Christ's sweet and easy yoke. In a word, we will sell all, even all our sins, to the last filthy rag of our heretofore doted-upon and darling delight, so that we may enjoy our blessed Jesus, whom you have told us, and we now believe, "God hath made both Lord and Christ."

Now, when we shall see and find in some measure the hearts of our hearers and spiritual patients thus prepared, both by legal dejections and terrors from the spirit of bondage, and also possessed with such melting and eager affections, wrought by the light of the gospel and offer of Christ; when their souls once begin to feel all sins, even their best beloved one, heavy and burthensome; to prize Jesus Christ far before all the world; to thirst for him infinitely more than for riches, pleasures, honours, or any earthly thing; to resolve to take him as their husband, and to obey him as their Lord for ever, and all this in truth; — I say, then and in this case we may have reason to minister comfort; then upon good ground we may go about our Master's command, which man-pleasers many times pitifully abuse, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people:" I mean in respect of spiritual bondage. "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned" (Isa. xl, 1, 2). We may tell them with what a compassionate and tender address God himself labours to refresh them. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires" (Isa. liv, 11). We may assure them in the word of life and truth, that Jesus Christ is theirs, and they are his; and compel them, as it were, by a holy violence, not without a great deal of just indignation against their loathness to believe and holding off in this case, to take his person, his merit, his blood, all his spiritual riches, privileges, excellencies, and with him possession of all things, even of the most glorious Deity itself, blessed for ever. See 1 Cor. iii, 21, 22, 23; John xvii, 21.

But now in the mean time, until sense of spiritual misery and poverty raise an hunger and thirst after Jesus Christ, before such like preparations and precedent affections as have been spoken of be wrought in the hearts of men by pressing the law and proclaiming the gospel, and that in sincerity (for the degree and measure we leave it to God, as a most free agent, in some they may be stronger, in some weaker), the preaching or promising of mercy, as already belonging unto them, is far more unseasonable and unseemly than snow in summer, rain in harvest, or honour for a fool. It is, in short, the very sealing them up with the spirit of delusion, that they may never so much as think of taking the right course to be converted. What sottish and sacrilegious audaciousness then is it in any dauber to thrust his profane hand into the treasury of God's mercy, and there carelessly, without any allowance from his highest Lord, to

scatter his dearest and most orient pearls amongst swine ! To warrant salvation to any unhumbléd sinner ! “To strengthen the hands of the wicked,” who never yet took sin to heart to any purpose ; and thirst far more (such true Gadarenes are they) after gold, satisfying their own lusts and perking above their brethren, than for the blood of Christ, by promising them life ! To assure mere civil men, and pharisees, who are so far from the sense of any spiritual poverty, that they are already swoln as full as the skin will hold with a self-conceit of their own rotten righteousness, that they shall be saved as well as the most strict disciple of Christ ! Especially since there is such a cloud of witnesses to the contrary, as you have heard before. Besides all which, upon this occasion take two or three more. Hear a most faithful and fruitful workman in the Lord’s harvest, of great skill, experience, and success in the most glorious art of converting souls, which makes me more willing to urge his authority, and esteem his judgment in points of this nature\*. “None,” saith he, “can prove or show precedent, that faith was wrought in an instant at first, without any preparation going before. Nor can it be conceived how a man should believe in Christ for salvation, that felt not himself before in a miserable estate, and wearied with it, and desired to get out of it into a better. As the needle goes before to pierce the cloth, and makes way for the thread to sew it, so is it in this case.” Afterward he tells us how and in what manner and order these predispositions and preparative acts, required for the plantation of faith and so securing us of the right season, and a comfortable calling to assure men of spiritual safety, are wrought in such as God is drawing unto Jesus Christ. He requires from the law, first, illumination ; secondly, conviction ; thirdly, legal terror. From the gospel, by the help of the Spirit : first, revealing the remedy ; secondly, belief of it in general ; thirdly, present support from sinking under the burthen and falling into despair ; fourthly, contrition, which is attended with some kind of, first, desire ; secondly, request ; thirdly, care ; fourthly, hope ; fifthly, joy ; sixthly, hungering and thirsting after mercy and after Christ ; seventhly, resolution to sell all, to wit, all sins, not to leave a hoof behind, &c. “And thus,” saith he, “God brings along the man that he purposeth to make his ; and when he is at this pass, God seals it up to him and enables him to believe ; and saith, Since thou wilt have no nay, be it unto thee according to thy desire ; and God seals him up by the

\* Rogers of Dedham, in his Doctrine of Faith.

Spirit of promise, as surely as any writing is made sure by sealing of it. Then he believes the word of God, and rests and casts himself upon it. And thus he finds himself discharged of all woe, made partaker of all good, at peace in himself, and fitted and in tune to do God service. This is to some sooner, to some later, according to the helps and means they have, and wise handling they meet withal, and as God gives power. It is hard to say at what instant faith is wrought, whether not till a man feels that he apprehends the promises, or even in his earnest desires, hungering and thirsting; for even these are pronounced blessed."

But here (for I desire and endeavour as much as I can possibly in every passage to prevent all matter both of scruple in the upright-hearted, and of cavil in the contrary minded) let no truly humbled sinner be discouraged, because he cannot find in himself these several workings, or other graces, in that degree and height, which he desires and hath perhaps seen, heard, or read of in some others. If he have them in truth, and truly thirsts and labours for their increase, he may go on with comfort. Neither let any be disheartened, though he did not observe so distinctly the order of the precedent acts, nor could discern so punctually their several operations in his soul; yet, if in substance and effect they have been wrought in him, and made way for Jesus Christ, he need not complain.

As this man of God in experimental divinity, so our renowned and invincible champions in their polemical discourses upon other occasions speak to the same purpose, telling us also of some antecedent acts humbling and preparing the soul for conversion. "There are," say they, "certain internal effects going before conversion or regeneration, which by virtue of the word and Spirit are wrought in the hearts of those which are not yet justified; such as, illumination of the mind and conscience with the knowledge of the word and will of God for that purpose; sense of sin; fear of punishment, or legal terror; advising and casting about for enlargement from such a miserable estate; some hope of pardon\*," &c. Let me but add one other, and he also of excellent learning, and then I have done. "Such is the nature of man," saith he†, "that before he can receive a true justifying faith, he must, as it were, be broken in pieces by the law (Jer. xxiii, 29). We are to be led from the fear of slaves through the fear of penitents to the fear of sons; and indeed one of these makes way for

\* Suffrag. Colleg. Theologorum Magnæ Britanniæ.

† Yates, in his Model of Divinity, book ii, chap. xxvi.

another, and the perfect love thrusts out fear; yet must fear bring in that perfect love, as a needle or bristle draws in the thread after it; or as the potion brings health. In the preparation and fitting us for our being in Christ, he requireth two things: First, the cutting us off as it were from the wild olive-tree: by which he meaneth two things: 1st, a violent pulling of us out of the corruption of nature, or a cutting, as it were, by the knife of the law, of an unregenerate man from his security, &c.: 2dly, a violent attraction to Christ for ease; man at the first plainly refusing it. The hunted beast flies to his den, the pursued malefactor to the horns of the altar, or city of refuge. Paul's misery drives him to God's mercy (Rom. vii, 24). The Israelites are driven into their chambers by the destroying angel; Balaam is made to lean back by the naked sword; Agur to run to Ithiel and Ucal, that is, Christ, when he is confounded with his own brutishness (Prov. xxx, 1, 2, 3). God must let loose his law, sin, conscience, and Satan to bait us, and kindle hell fire in our souls, before we shall be driven to seek to Christ. Secondly, a paring and trimming of us for our putting into Christ by our humiliation for sin, which is thus wrought. God giveth the sinner to see by the law his sin and the punishment of it, the detection whereof drives him to compunction and a pricking of heart, which is greater or lesser, and carries with it divers symptoms and sensible passions of grief; and works a sequestration from his former courses, and makes him loathe himself," &c.

And yet by the way take this caution and forewarning: If any should think of these precedent acts, these preparative workings of the law and gospel, which make way for the infusion of faith, as any meritorious means to draw on Christ, it were a most false, rotten, foolish, execrable, popish, absurd, Luciferian misconceit, and might justly merit never to obtain mercy at God's bountiful hands, nor part in the merits of Christ. I speak thus to fright every one for ever from any such abhorred thought. God the Father offers his Son most freely. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John iii, 16). "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given" (Isa. ix, 6). "If thou knewest the gift of God," saith Christ unto the woman of Samaria, "and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink." (John iv, 10). "Much more they, which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness," &c. (Rom. v, 17). Christ calleth himself a "gift," and it is called the "gift of righteousness;" and nothing so free as gift. And therefore those di-

vines speak not unfitly who say, "It is given unto us, as fathers give lands and inheritance to their children; as kings give pardons to their subjects, having merited death. They give them, because they will, out of the freeness of their minds." All those who would come unto Christ, and desire to take him as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, must be utterly unbottomed of themselves, and built only on the rich and free mercy of God revealed in the gospel. They must be emptied first of all conceit of any righteousness or worth in themselves at all. Secondly, of all hope of any ability or possibility to help themselves. Nay, filled, thirdly, with sense of their own unworthiness, naughtiness, nothingness. Fourthly, and with such a thirst after that water of life, that they are most willing to sell all for it, and cry heartily, Give me drink, or else I die. And then when they are thus most nothing in themselves, and do so long for the "rivers of living water," they are certainly most welcome unto Jesus Christ, and may take him most freely. Hear how sweetly he calls them: "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price" (Isa. lv, 1). "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii, 37, 38). "It is done: I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Revel. xxi, 6). "And let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii, 17). We must therefore by no means conceive of the forenamed preparative humiliations and precedent works of the law and gospel as of any meritorious qualifications to draw on Christ (for he is given most freely), but as of needful predispositions to drive us unto Christ. For a man must feel himself in misery before he will go about to find a remedy; be sick before he will seek the physician; be in prison before he will sue for a pardon; be wounded before he will prize a plaister and precious balsam. A sinner must be weary of his former wicked ways, and tired with legal terror, before he will have recourse to Jesus Christ for refreshing, and lay down his bleeding soul in his blessed bosom. He must be sensible of his spiritual poverty, beggary, and slavery under the devil, before he thirst for heavenly righteousness, and willingly take up Christ's sweet and easy yoke. He must be cast down, con-

founded, condemned, a cast-away, and lost in himself, before he will look about for a Saviour. He must cry heartily, "I am unclean, I am unclean," before he will long and labour to wash in that most sovereign and soul-saving fountain, opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. xiii, 1). He must sell all, before he will be willing and eager to buy the treasure hid in the field.

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#### CHAP. IV.

Four particular directions for the avoiding this error. I. How the Law is to be pressed. II. How the Gospel to be preached. III. How Christ to be proposed. IV. How pardon to be assured. And ways to be used for the putting of these directions in practice.

Now thus to prepare, wound, afflict, and humble the soul that it may be fitted for Jesus Christ, and so for comfort upon good ground, let ministers, or whosoever meddle in matters of this nature, publicly or privately, use all warrantable means, let them press the law, promise mercy, propose Christ, &c., do what they will seasonably and wisely. Let them improve all their learning, wisdom, discretion, mercifulness, experience, wit, eloquence, sanctified unto them for that purpose, so that the work be done.

I. In pressing the law, besides other dexterities and directions for managing their ministry in this point successfully by God's blessing, let them take notice of this particular, which may prove very available to begin this legal work. It is a principle attended with much success.

Pressing upon men's consciences with a zealous, discreet powerfulness their special, principal, fresh bleeding sins, is a notable means to break their hearts and bring them to remorse. That most heinous and bloody sin of killing Jesus Christ, in which they had newly imbrued their hands, pressed upon the consciences of Peter's hearers, breaks and tears their hearts in pieces (Acts ii, 23, 36, 37). So adultery, secretly intimated by Christ's words unto the woman of Samaria (John iv, 18), seems to have struck her to the heart (ver. 19). So the Jews having idolatry pressed upon their consciences by Samuel (1 Sam. vii, 6); the sin of asking a king (1 Sam. xii, 19); usury by Nehemiah (chap. v, 12); strange wives by Ezra (chap. x, 9), were thereupon mightily moved and much softened in their hearts, as appears in the cited places. Consider for this purpose that work upon David's heart by Nathan's minis-

try, and Felix trembling when Paul struck him on the right vein.

The reasons why this more particular discovery and denouncing of judgment against a man's principal sin is like God assisting with the spirit of bondage to put such life into the work of the law, are such as these :—

1. "The sword of the Spirit," which is the word of God, being wielded by the hand of the Holy Ghost, and edged, as it were, with the special power of God's blessing for the cutting asunder of the iron sinews of a stubborn and stony heart, doth crush and conquer, strike through and break in pieces with an irresistible power, proportioned to the insolency or easiness of resistance. My meaning is this, as philosophers say of the lightning, that by reason of the easiness of the passage, weakness of resistance, porosity of the parts, it pierceth through the purse, scabbard, and bark, without any such scorching and visible hurt; but melts the money, the sword, rends and shivers the tree, because their substance and solidity doth more exercise and improve its activeness and ability: so this spiritual sword, though it strike at every sin, and passeth through "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow," yet the hairy pate of the main corruption and master sin it wounds with a witness; it there tortures and tears in pieces with extraordinary anguish and smart, searching and sense; for that opposeth with the most flinty iron sinew, to blunt and deaden its edge if it were possible.

2. In consciences regularly and rightly wounded and awakened, sins are wont to bite and sting proportionably to their heinousness and the exorbitancy of their former sensual impressions. Some like a mastiff, some like a scorpion, some like a wolf in the evening. But understand, that spiritual anguish surpasseth immeasurably any corporal pain, therefore conceive of them with a vast disproportion. Now the darling delight or captain sin frightening the heart with greatest horror, and stinging with extremity proportionable to its former outrages upon conscience, doth by an accidental power (God blessing the business) give a great stroke to drive a man to deepest detestation of himself, to throw him down to the lowest step of penitent dejection, to render more eager his thirsty greediness after pardon and grace, and at length to terrify him out of his natural estate.

3. A man's principal and most prevailing sin is Satan's strongest hold. When he is in danger to be dislodged and driven by the power of the word out of the other parts of

the soul, as it were, and from possession of a man by all other sins, he retires hither as to his castle and most impregnable fort. And therefore if this be soundly beaten upon by the hammer and horror of the law, and battered about his ears, he will be quickly enforced to quit the place altogether.

It may be good counsel then, and often seasonable, to say unto those men of God who desire to drive the devil out of others in some sort, as the king of Syria said to his captains, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel." My meaning is, let them address the sharpest edge of their spiritual sword, yet as well with a holy charitable discretion as with resolute downright dealing, against those sins which bear greatest sway in them they have to deal with. Be it their covetousness, ambition, lust, drunkenness, lukewarmness, monstrousness of the fashion, sacrilege, oppression, usury, backsliding, murder, luxury, opposition to the good way, hatred of the saints, or what other sin soever they discover in them to minister greatest advantage to Satan, to keep them fastest in his clutches. No sin must be spared, but let the reigning sin be thrust at especially.

II. For opening of the most rich and orient mines of all those sweetest mercies folded up within the bowels of God's dearest compassions and of the mystery of his free grace and love through the Son of his love; upon purpose to invite and allure those that are without to come in; and to stir up our hearers to bring broken hearts, bruised spirits, bleeding souls unto the throne of grace, upon the same ground, but infinitely more gracious, that encouraged the servants of Benhadad to address themselves towards the king of Israel; "And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life" (1 Kings xx, 31). The most desperate rebels heretofore, upon present true remorse for their former rage in sin, resolving sincerely to stand on God's side for ever hereafter, may safely and upon good ground thus reason within themselves: Alas! we have done very villanously; we have served Satan a long time; we walk up and down as condemned men, ripe for destruction long ago; hell itself even groans for us; we may justly look every moment for a *mittimus* to cast us headlong into the dungeon of brimstone and fire; and yet we will try; we will go and throw down ourselves before the throne of grace in dust and ashes, and cry as the publican did unto the great God

of heaven; for he is a "merciful God, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." And then, not only *peradventure*, but most certainly, they shall be received to mercy, and he will save the life of their souls; for this point of preaching mercy only to hearten men to come in, and to nourish in them a hope of pardon in case of penitency, &c., see my Discourse of True Happiness. And I will only add and advise at this time this one thing of great importance in the point, that after a plentiful magnifying and amplifying the mercy of God, by its infiniteness, eternity, freeness, and incomparable excellency every way, only upon purpose to assure the greatest sinners of most certain acceptation and pardon if they will presently turn with truth of heart from Satan to the living God, from all sin to his holy service; I say, that we then take heed and make sure as much as in us lies, that no impenitent unbelieving wretch, none that goes on in his trespasses and sins, willingly and delightfully in any one sin, receive any comfort by any such discourse, as though as yet he had any part or interest at all in any one drop of all that boundless and bottomless sea of mercy; that were a means to nail him fast to his natural estate for ever. But only thence conceive, that if he will presently lay down arms against the Majesty of heaven, and come in with a truly penitent, humbled soul, thirsting heartily for Jesus Christ, and resolve unfeignedly to take his yoke upon him, there is no number or notoriousness of sins that can possibly hinder his gracious entertainment at God's mercy seat. For this end, let us tell all such, that though the mercies of God be infinite, yet they are dispensed according to his truth. Now the oracles of divine truth tell us, that those who shall find mercy are such as confess and forsake their sins. "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy" (Prov. xxviii, 13). Those men who do not confess and forsake them shall have no mercy. That the parties to whom good tidings of mercy and comfort are to be preached, are the "poor, the broken-hearted, them that are bruised, those that labour and are heavy laden, all that mourn," &c. (Luke iv, 18; Matt. xi, 28; Isa. lxi, 2, 3). That the man to whom the Lord looks graciously, is "even he that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word" (Isa. lxvi, 2). That whosoever by his free mercy through Christ "is born of God, doth not commit sin" (1 John iii, 9); I mean with allowance, purpose, perseverance. No sin reigns in such a one, &c. And yet, alas! how many miserable men will needs most falsely persuade themselves

and others that they have a portion in the mercies of God, and hug with extraordinary applause and embracement the formal flattering messages of men-pleasers and time-servers, to daub over such rotten hopes, who yet notwithstanding "go on still in their trespasses; who were never yet sensible of the burthen of their corruptions and spiritual beggary; never wounded in conscience, or troubled in mind to any purpose for their sins; never mourned in secret and sincerely for the abominations of their youth; could never yet find in their hearts to sell all for the buying of that one pearl of great price; nor ever yet so prized Jesus Christ as to leave their darling pleasures, though very base and abominable, to enjoy the unspeakable and glorious pleasures of his gracious kingdom? Nay, such as heartily serve some captain and commanding sin in heart, or life, or calling, as their own consciences, if they consult with them impartially in cool blood, can easily tell them; as lust, the world, ambition, the times, the fashion, their pleasures, their profits, their passions, their ease, self-love, pride, revenge, the dunghill delight of good fellowship, or the like.

And here then let me discover a notable depth of Satan, whereby he doth baffle and blindfold his slaves most grossly. You know full well and hear often the common cry of all carnal men, especially under any conscientious ministry, against preaching of judgment, and for preaching of mercy. (See the causes why they cannot approve downright dealings and powerful application of the law, in my Discourse of True Happiness.) But what do you think is the reason that they gape so greedily after preaching of mercy? Not that they can endure the preaching of it, as I now have taught, and as it only ought to those that are without; to wit, to have first the dearness, the sweetness, the freeness, the full glory of God's immeasurable mercy revealed unto them, only as a motive and encouragement to come in, but ever at the close and conclusion to be made to understand and know certainly, that not so much as one drop of all that bottomless depth of mercy and bounty in Jesus Christ doth as yet belong unto them, lying in any state of unregenerateness, or in in any kind of hypocrisy, whilst they "regard any wickedness in their heart," and are not willing to "pluck out their right eyes and cut off their right hands;" I mean, to make an everlasting divorce from their former dearest sensual delights and sins of their bosom: for only "they who confess and forsake their sins shall have mercy" (Prov. xxviii, 13). This way of preaching mercy would nettle and gall them as much perhaps as

pressing of judgment. Nay, why not more? Proportionably to that which divines hold, that the privation and loss of heavenly joys and the beatific presence of God is far more bitter than the torments of sense and positive pains of hell. But to tell you their true meaning and their very hearts: their aim in so complaining and calling for mercy from our ministry is to have it so and in such a manner proposed and preached, that they may thence collect and conceive, that they are in state good enough to go to heaven as they are, though in truth they be mere strangers to the life of God and holy strictness of the saints; were never truly humbled with sight of sin and sense of wrath, nor experimentally acquainted at all with the mystery of the new birth; that they may conclude and say within themselves, Howsoever some ministers of the purer and preciser strain fright us continually with nothing but judgment, terror, damnation, and will not suffer us to be quiet, no not so much as in one sin, yet it is our good hap sometimes to meet with some merciful men who will help us to heaven without so much ado, and upon easier terms. In a word, they would if possible have just so much mercy as might assure and warrant them to carry securely their sins in their bosom to heaven with them; to live as they list in this life, and to die the death of the righteous; which is a conceit most ridiculous, absurd, and more than utterly impossible. What a hateful trick then is this, and horrible imposture, which they suffer Satan to put upon them.

III. In proposing of Christ, let the man of God set out as much as he can possibly the excellency of his person, the invaluable preciousness of his blood, the riches of his heavenly purchases, the gracious sweetness of his invitations, the generality and freeness of his offers (Mark xvi, 16; Matt. xi, 28; John vii, 37; Revel. xxii, 17); the glorious privileges he brings with him, reconciliation to God, adoption, forgiveness of sins, justification, righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, redemption, &c. Possession of all things, "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii, 22, 23). Let him tell his hearers that the blood of Christ is called the "blood of God" (Acts xx, 28), and therefore of infinite merit and invaluable price. It sprang out of his human nature, and therefore finite in its own nature, and lost upon the ground. But the person that shed it being the Son of God, did set upon it such an excellency and eternity of virtue and value, that the infiniteness of its merit, and inestimableness of its worth, lasts everlastingly. It

will be as fresh and effectual to wash away the sins of the last man that shall be called upon earth, as it was those of the penitent thief, who saw it with his bodily eyes gushing out of his blessed side upon the cross, or the first man who did first savingly apprehend that first promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Let him assure them it is so sovereign, that in a truly broken, humbled, and thirsty soul, it turneth the most scarlet and crimson sins into snow and wool; that upon compunction and coming in, it washed away that horrible and bloody guilt from the souls of them that spilt it (Acts ii). Let them know also, in how high a degree and heinously they offend from time to time, who refuse to take Jesus Christ offered most freely, and without exception of any person, every sabbath, every sermon, either in plain and direct terms, or impliedly at the least. Oh! little do people think who sit under our ministry unwrought upon by the word, what a grievous and fearful sin they commit and carry home from the house of God, day after day, in "neglecting so great salvation, in forsaking their own mercy, and in judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life;" I mean, by choosing upon a free offer of his soul-saving blood, to cleave rather to a lust (horrible indignity!) than to Jesus Christ blessed for ever; rather to wallow in the mire and mud of earthly pelf, in the filth and froth of swinish pleasures, in idleness, pride, worldliness, uncleanness, drunkenness, strange fashions, scorning professors, contempt of the power of godliness, railing against religion, revelling, &c. than abandoning these filthy harlots to take the Son of God for their dear and everlasting husband. This not believing, this refusing Christ, this not taking him in the manner and sense as I have said, is such a sin, though not so thought upon and taken to heart, that divines speak of it as of a most transcendent sin, the greatest sin, the sin of sins, the only sin, as it were, from such places as these:—"But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth, and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city" (Matt. xxii, 7). He means those who were invited to the "Son's marriage, and made light of it." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John iii, 18). When the Comforter is come "he will convince the world of sin; because they believe not on me." He means this sin alone, saith Austin. As though not believing on the Son of God were the only sin. It is indeed the main and master sin, because, as the same father speaks truly, "this remaining, the guilt of all other sins abides upon the soul: this removed, all other sins are remitted."

Nay, and besides the horribleness and heinousness of the sin, what height and perfection of madness is it? That whereas a man but renouncing his base, rotten, transitory, sinful pleasures, followed continually at the heels with vengeance and horror, and only taking Jesus Christ, in whom are hidden and heaped up the fulness of grace and treasures of all perfection, might have thereupon (to say nothing of the excellency of his person, purchases of his passion, and possession of the most blessed Deity) a full and free discharge thereby at the hands of so happy a husband, from every moment of the everlastingness of hellish torments, and a deed presently sealed with his own heart's blood, for an undoubted right to every minute of the eternity of heavenly joys; yet should in cool blood most wickedly and willingly, after so many entreaties, invitations, importunity only for the good of his poor immortal soul, refuse the change! Heaven and earth may be astonished; angels and all creatures may justly stand amazed at this prodigious sottishness and monstrous madness of such miserable men! The world is wont to call God's people precise fools, because they are willing to sell all they have for that one pearl of great price; to part with profits, or pleasures, preferments, their right hand, their right eye, every thing, any thing, rather than to leave Jesus Christ. But who do you think now are the true and great fools of the world; and who are likeliest one day to groan for anguish of spirit, and say within themselves, "This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach? We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. Now is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints; therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined unto us; and the sun of righteousness hath not rose upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of wickedness and destruction. Yea, we have gone through deserts where there lay no way. But as for the way of the Lord, we have not known it. What hath pride profited us, or what good hath riches with our vaunting brought us? All these things are passed away like a shadow, and as a post that hasteth by."

Nay, and yet further, besides the extraordinariness of the iniquity and folly in refusing Christ freely offered, it shall most certainly be hereafter plagued with extremest tormenting fury, and most desperate gnashing of teeth. For with what infinite horror and restless anguish will this thought rend a man's heart in pieces, and gnaw upon his conscience, when he considers in hell, that he hath lost heaven for a lust; and whereas he might at every sermon had even the

Son of God to be his husband for the very taking ; and have lived with him for ever in unspeakable bliss, yet neglecting so great salvation, must now, crying out therefore continually against himself as the most raging madman that ever breathed, lie in unquenchable flames without remedy, ease, or end ! It is the highest honour that can be imagined, and a mystery of greatest amazement that ever was, that the Son of God should make suit unto sinful souls to be their husband. And yet so it is ; “ he stands at the door and knocks ; ” if you will give him entrance, he will bring himself and heaven into your hearts. “ We are Christ’s ambassadors, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God.” We are Christ’s spokesmen, if I may so speak, to woo and win you unto him. Now what can you say for yourselves that you stand out ? Why come you not in ? If the devil would give you leave to speak out and in plain terms, one would say, I had rather be damned than leave my drunkenness ; another, I love the world better than Jesus Christ ; a third, I will not part with my easy and gainful trade of usury for the “ treasure hid in the field ; ” and so on : so that in truth you must needs all confess, that you hereby “ judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life ; ” that you are wilful murderers of your own souls ; that you commit such a wickedness, that all the creatures in heaven and earth cry shame upon you for it. Nay, and if you go on without repentance, you may expect that the gnawings of conscience for this one sin of refusing Christ may perhaps be equal to the united horrors of all the rest.

What is the matter, I wonder, that you will not entertain the match ? If we stand upon honour and noble family, he that makes love and suit unto our souls “ hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, “ KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS ” (Rev. xix, 16). If upon beauty, hear how he is described : “ My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers : his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl : his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold : his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet : yea, he is altogether lovely ” (Cant. v, 10—16). Now you must understand, that the Spirit of God, by these outward beauties and excellencies, labours in

some measure to shadow out and represent unto us the incomparable excellency of inward graces, the dignity, the glory, the spiritual fairness of Jesus Christ, that we may know that he is wholly and altogether lovely, delightful, and precious. If our hearts are set upon ease and contentment, he can lead us to "fulness of joy and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore." If we desire honourable alliance, he will bring us to "an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven; and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." If we stand upon wealth, we shall have all things with him, which is a large possession. If we respect love, "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv, 13): and he, "being the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," came down from his bosom, the well-spring of immortality and bliss, the fulness of joy and unapproachable light, into a house of flesh upon this base and miserable earth. He passed through a life full of all manner of vexations, miseries, persecutions, indignities, slanders, speaking against of sinners, &c. He was so prodigiously slandered that they said he had a devil (John viii, 48); whereas "the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily" (Col. ii, 9). He was cunningly hunted long, and at last violently haled by a pack of hell-hounds to a cruel and bloody death, which for the extremity and variety of pains, for the enraged spite of the executioners, for the innocency and excellency of the person suffering, the like never was, shall, or can be endured. His passions were such, so bitter and insupportable, that they would have made any mere creature to have sunk down under the burthen of them to the bottom of hell. He was tortured extremely, and suffered grievous things both in body and soul, from heaven, earth, and hell. His blessed body was given up as an anvil to be beaten upon by the violent and villanous hands of wretched miscreants, without all measure or mercy, until they had left no one part free from some particular and special torment. His skin and flesh were rent with scourges, his hands and feet pierced with nails, his head with thorns, his very heart with a spear point. All his senses, all his parts, indeed his whole sacred body, was made a rueful spectacle to angels and to men, of all the most base and barbarous usage which malice could devise and cruelty execute. Yet all this was but a shadow of his suffering; the substance of his suffering was the agony of his soul. Give me any affliction save the affliction of the mind; "for the spirit of a man," saith Solomon, "will

sustain all his other infirmities ; but a wounded spirit who can bear ?” Yet his soul, though he was the Prince of glory, and Lord of heaven and earth, upon the cross was even as a scorched heath, without so much as any drop of comfort either from heaven or earth. The grievous weight of all the sins of all his children, the least of which had been enough to have pressed them down into the bottom of hell, lay now heavy upon him. The powers of darkness were let loose to afflict him. He wrestled even with the fierce wrath of his Father, and all the forces of the infernal kingdom, with such anguish of heart, that in the garden it wrung out of his precious body a sweat “ as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground,” with such agony of spirit, that upon the cross he cried, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” And the measure of all these sufferings and sorrows was so past all measure, that all the creatures, save sinful men only, both in heaven and earth, seemed to be amazed and moved with them. The sun in the heavens drew in his beams, unwilling as it were to see the spotless blood of the Son of God spilt as water upon the ground. The earth itself shrunk and trembled under it. The very rocks rent asunder, as if they had sense and feeling of his intolerable, and, save by himself, unconquerable pains. The whole frame of nature seemed astonished at the mournful complaint of the Lord of the whole world. These, and far more than these, or than can be expressed, our blessed Saviour, being Son of the Most high God, endured for no other end but to ransom us from the bondage of Satan and of hell, in a thirsting desire of saving all penitent sinners, and to offer himself freely a most glorious and everlasting husband to all those who with broken and believing hearts cast themselves into his bosom. Such admirable and unutterable perfections, beauties, endowments, sufferings, and inflamed affections as these in the heavenly suitor unto our sinful souls, doth mightily aggravate the heinous and horrible sin of refusing him.

Thus, and in this manner, would I have the men of God to magnify, enlarge, and represent to the hearts of their hearers all the excellences of Jesus Christ, with the worth, merit, and efficacy of his blood. To set out to the utmost they can possibly, the glory of the gospel, with all the riches of mercy, goodness, and free grace, revealed and offered therein, &c. So that they tell them withal that Jesus Christ takes none but such as are willing to take upon them his yoke ; that he gives himself to none but such as are ready to sell all, in the sense I have said, that they may enjoy his blessed self. That the glorious grace of the gospel

shines savingly to none but such as "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Tit. ii, 11, 12). That those, whose souls are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ from all sin, are only such as walk in the light, as God is in the light; who make conscience of detesting and declining all sins and works of darkness discovered to them by the light of God's holy book, and sincerely set their hearts and hands with love and careful endeavour to every duty enjoined therein. In a word, that as that fountain opened to the house of David for sin and for uncleanness (I mean the blood of that immaculate lamb, Jesus Christ, the holy and the righteous) doth turn all the sins, even the very scarlet and crimson, of a truly broken heart, and every true mourner in Zion, into snow and wool, so it will never wash away the least sinful stain from the proud heart of any unhumiliated pharisee.

That hereby no strangers unto the love and life of godliness may be deceived by appropriating unto themselves any of these glorious things, which are only proper to the sealed fountain, but only conceive of them as excellent motives to cause them to come in, I would have the preaching of Christ fill the soul of every true hearted Nathanael every time with "unspeakable and glorious joy," with all those evangelical pleasures, which neither "eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." But I would have it only make every unregenerate man sensible of what infinite blessedness he bereaves himself by continuing a rebel; that thereupon he may be moved to make haste out of his present hell into this new heaven, so fairly opened and freely offered unto him.

IV. Besides pressing the law, promising mercy, proposing Christ, &c. to stir men in their natural states, to make them entertain thoughts of coming in, to humble them in the sight of the Lord under the heavy burthen of all their sins, assure them also of pardon, in case they will leave Satan's service, and so prepare them for Christ; let God's ministers lay hold upon all warrantable ways which they shall find and feel out of their ministerial experience and holy wisdom to be available and prevail for that purpose: so that the work be done in truth, and that they do not, like the devil's daubers, deceive them to the eternal ruin and damnation of their souls, by telling them that they have Christ already, and are safe enough for salvation, whereas indeed as yet there is no such matter.

Such points as these are wont to make attentive natural men to startle in their seats, to look about them something

more than ordinarily,—to wit, to divide the precious from the vile; to distinguish that one true happy state of grace from all states of unregenerateness, and all kinds of hypocrisy; to tell them out of the book of God, how far a man may go in general graces and doing many things, and yet come short of heaven; to deliver marks of sincere professors, of a saving faith, of true repentance, of a sound conversion. But I would have this done with a great deal of spiritual wisdom and heavenly understanding, with much godly discretion and caution; lest thereby, either the formal professor may be encouraged, or the weakest Christian disheartened. To discourse of the fewness and scarcity of those which shall be saved, and that even under the light and within the sound of the gospel; “many are called, but few chosen” (Matt. xx, 16). Consider the parable of the sower, Matt. xiii. There is but one good soil upon which the word falls prosperously; but three reprobate grounds, as it were, upon which it is lost as water upon the ground. Thus let the men of God acquaint themselves with such points as they conceive the likeliest and most pregnant to pierce their hearers’ hearts, and come closest to their consciences, that so by the help of God they may pull them out of hell.

And there are some places also in the book of God, which being rightly handled and powerfully applied, seem to have a special keenness to strike at and cut asunder the iron sinews of the most obstinate heart, and of more aptness to serve for the rousing and awaking of mere civil men, formal professors, pharisees, and foolish virgins out of their desperate slumber of spiritual self deceit. Such as these: “And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven” (Deut. xxix, 19, 20). “God shall wound the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses” (Psalm lxxviii, 21). “Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, &c. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer: they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me” (Prov. i, 24, 28). “He that being often reprovèd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Prov. xxix, 1). “In thy filthiness is lewdness; because I have purged thee, and thou

wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee" (Ezek. xxiv, 13). "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. iv, 18.) "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (1 John iii, 9). "Love the brotherhood" (1 Pet. ii, 17). "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii, 14). "The devils also believe and tremble" (James ii, 19). "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able" (Luke xiii, 24). "And whosoever shall not receive you, &c. Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (Matt. x, 14, 15). "And from the days of John the Baptist, until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. xi, 12). "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?" (Matt. v, 47.) "I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v, 20). These fellows represented to the eye of the world a goodly and glorious show of freedom from gross sins: "I am not," saith the pharisee, Luke xviii, 11, "as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," &c; of works; first, of righteousness, "I give tithes of all that I possess." Secondly, of piety, "He went up to pray." Thirdly, of mercy, besides fasting and prayer, they gave alms (Matt. vi); and yet Christ speaks thus peremptorily to his hearers: "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, &c. ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." He saith not simply, ye shall not enter; but ye shall "in no case" enter. And yet how many who come short of these will be very angry, if the ministers tell them that they shall certainly come short of the kingdom of heaven.

I have done with daubing and plaistering over rotten hearts with plausible persuasions, that they shall not be damned: I mean that most cruel and accursed trade of "strengthening with lies the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life" (Ezek. xiii, 22), whereby thousands are sent hoodwinked to hell (more is the pity!) even in this blessed time of the gospel: and I come now to another error about comforting afflicted consciences.

## CHAP. V.

The Second Error is the indiscreet applying of Comfort to them that are not grieved aright. Two Cases wherein Men grieved are not to be presently comforted.

WHEN the spiritual physician promiseth comfort, applies the promises, assures of mercy, acceptation, and pardon, —

1. When the ground of grief is not in truth trouble for sin, but some outward trouble. Some in such a case may cast out by the way some faint and formal complaints of their sins, and seem to seek direction and satisfaction about the state of their souls, while the true root and principal spring of their present heaviness and heart's grief, is some secret earthly discontentment, the biting and bitterness of some worldly sting. It may be the loss or desperate course of some overloved child; decay and going backward in their estate; fear of falling into beggary; some unexpected discontents and disappointments after marriage; some great disgrace and shame fallen upon them in the eye of the world; some long and tedious sickness, pinching them extremely, for want of peace with God, and patience to pass through it, or the like.

In this case, after the man of God by his best wisdom and searching, experimental trials and interrogatories fitted for that purpose, whereby he may give a strong conjecture, if not a peremptory censure, hath discovered the imposture, let his desire and endeavour be to turn the torrent of worldly tears, and grief for transitory things, upon sin. When a vein is broken and bleeds inward, or a man bleeds excessively at the nose, the physician is wont to open a vein in the arm, so to divert the current of the blood, that it may be carried the right way, for the safety and preservation of the party. Do proportionably in this point.

Let such know:—First, that “sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. vii, 10). It dries the bones, consumes the marrow, chills the blood, wastes the spirits, eats up the heart, shorteneth life, and cutteth off too soon from the day of gracious visitation. It is a base thing for an immortal soul to be put thus out of tune and temper with mortal things, and most unworthy its heavenly birth, breeding under the ministry, and everlasting abode. Secondly, that sorrow spent upon the world is like a perfumed precious water thrown into the channel or sink-hole, which would make a sweet scent in a humbled soul, and help excellently against the noisome savour of sin. Fire put into the thatch would turn all into combustion; dung placed in your par-

lour would poison all. But lay the one upon the hearth, and it would warm and comfort; the other upon the land, and it fatteneth and makes fruitful. So sorrow misplaced upon earthly things, fills a man with swarms of gnawing cares, and brings many devouring harpies into the heart; but being turned upon sin and former sinful courses, which is the only right, proper, profitable use thereof, it may procure a great deal of ease and enlargement to the heavy spirit, and help to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Thirdly, that the tithe perhaps of grief, trouble of mind, vexation of spirit, sadness and sorrow about worldly things, in respect of the bulk and quantity, if sincere, and set upon the right object, might serve to drive us unto Christ, and afterwards in God's gracious acceptation, for saving repentance. Methinks it should be a very quickening motive to make a man "be sorry for nothing but sin," and to turn all his grief and groans, sighs and tears upon his transgressions only; to wit, to consider that an impenitent carnal worldling doth pass through even in this life (where he hath all the heaven he is ever like to have) incomparably more comfortless heart's grief, slavish torments of mind, and heaviness of spirit towards endless pains than the strictest Christian and most mortified saint doth endure in his passage to everlasting pleasures. Fourthly, that besides many other pestilent properties, worldly sorrow doth also double, nay multiply and mightily enrage the venom, bitterness, and sting of every cross accident, loss, disgrace, &c. When Ahithophel was disgraced by neglect of his counsel, which "was in those days as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God," carnal grief so grew upon him, that "he gat him home to his house, put his household in order, and hanged himself." What was the disgrace to this desperate end! Haman being crossed by Mordecai's discourtesy and contempt, did so grieve and trouble himself, that having "told his wife and friends of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king, &c.; yet professeth unto them, that all this availed him nothing so long as he saw Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." (Esther v, 11, 12, 13). Now whether do you think was the most grievous thing to bear; the bare omission of a mere compliment, or an universal distaste, and disenjoyment of all outward comforts heaped upon him to the height and in excellency? The hundredth part of Job's losses, and less, hath many times since made many a covetous worldling to cut his own throat. I have known some for the loss of an

overloved child to have languished, fallen into a consumption, and lost their own lives. But now on the other side, besides many other gracious effects, "sorrow according to God is more delicious and sweeter than any worldly delight," as Chrysostom truly tells us in many places. To whom modern divines accord. "The very tears that a good conscience sheds," saith one \*, "have more joy and pleasure in them than the world's greatest joys." "This is certain," saith another †, "that there is more lightness of heart and true delight in the sorrow of the saints, than in the loudest laughter of the world. For unspeakable joy is mingled with unutterable groans."

2. When it is not any kindly touch of conscience for sin wrought by the ministry; but terrors and affrighting distempers arising from the dark mists of a melancholic humour in the brain, which cause a man to complain. In this black and sad humour, Satan, God suffering him (and of itself also it is pregnant enough this way), hath great advantage to raise and represent to the fantasy many fearful things, terrible objects, grisly thoughts, hideous injections, and temptations to despair, self-destruction, &c. Whereupon the party so affected and afflicted is wont, out of impatience of such uncouth horrors and heaviness, to address himself and have recourse to some man of God, some noted physician of the soul; not from any purpose and resolution to become a new man and alter his courses; but only for hope of ease, enlargement from the tyranny of that passion, and recovery to wonted quietness of mind; not expecting or aiming at all at any other change, but from present melancholy to former mirth, from this abhorred, irksome, insupportable state of sadness, to his accustomed sensual, or civil contentment at least.

In this case, let the art and aid of physic be improved to abate and take off the excess and fantasticalness of this horrible humour, and then let the party be advised to employ and spend the native and kindly sadness of that uncomfortable constitution in sorrowing for sin, in trembling at the threats of God's judgments, in fearing to offend, and flying under the wings of Christ for sanctuary, that so he may happily bring supernatural and heavenly lightsomeness into his soul, by pardon from God, peace of conscience, and evangelical pleasures. It is incredible to consider what assistance and advantage a gracious man hath by his sweet communion with Jesus Christ, and those refreshing beams of comfort which shine from his face, to confine and con-

\* Dike, of Conscience, chap. iii. † Rolloc, on John xi.

quer those many impertinent, irksome, and vexing vagaries of this wild humour, which with much folly and fury tyrannize in the fearful fantasies of graceless men, and make their life very disconsolate and abhorred. I am persuaded the very same measure of melancholic matter, which raises many times in the heads and hearts of worldlings (having besides the guilt of their unforgiven sins staring with grisly representations in the face of their consciences, and acquainted with no comfort but that which comes from carnal joys) continual clouds of many strange horrors and ghastly fears, nay, and sometimes make them stark mad; I say, the very same in a sanctified man may be so mollified and moderated by spiritual delight and sovereignty of grace, that he is not only preserved from the sting and venom of them, but, by God's blessing, from any such desperate extremities, violent distempers and distractions, which keep the other in a kind of hell upon earth. If the very darkness of the hellish dungeon were in the heart, yet reaching out the hand of faith and receiving Christ, that blessed sun of righteousness, would dispel and disperse it to nothing. Much more methinks the light of grace and heavenly wisdom may in some good measure dissolve and master the mists and miseries of this earthly humour. Religion then, and religious courses and conformities, do not make melancholic men mad, as the true madmen of this world would persuade us. For you must know, that besides Belials and debauched companions, there are a generation of worldly wise men also, right brave and jolly fellows in their own conceits and in the opinion of some flattering claw-backs; but by testimony of the truth itself stark mad about the service of God and their own salvation, who cursedly sear their own consciences with the hottest irons in the devil's forge, by breaking out into such blasphemies as these, when they hear or see any extraordinary heavy-heartedness, temptation, distraction, or spiritual distemper to have seized upon any that desire to be saved: "You see now what becomes of so much reading the scriptures, of plying prayer and private duties with so much ado; of meddling with mysteries of religion; of meditating so much of heavenly things, of taking sin so deeply to heart, and holding such strict conformity to God's word," &c. Blessed God! Is thine holy book become (execrable blasphemy!) a perverter, distracter, and poisoner of men's souls; which being the glorious issue of thine own infinite understanding was purposely created as a most precious panacea, an universal medicinal storehouse for the cure of all spiritual maladies; an inexhausted treasury of all sound comfort, true

joy, peace, and refreshing? Now the Lord rebuke thee, Satan, and return as dung upon thine own face this villanous, base, and wicked slander, which by thy graceless instruments thou labourest to cast upon the glorious face of Christianity, the incomparable sweetness of the ways of grace, and that one necessary thing. I have known, when the only wise God hath suffered, for ends seen and seeming good to his heavenly wisdom, the hideous and raging humour of melancholy to darken the native clearness of the animal spirits in the brain, requisite to a due discretion of things apprehended, and to blunder and disorder the objects and operations of the imagination in his dearest child, even to distraction and breaking out into that inordinate passion against reason;—I say, then, the concurrent cry and clamour of the enemies of the power of godliness to be, “This it is now to be so bookish, to follow preachers so much, to be more holy than their neighbours, never to have done in serving of God.” “Her so much reading the scriptures, and such poring upon precise books (so they call those which most pierce the conscience, and guide the clearest in the holy path) hath made her stark mad. The puritan is now beside herself,” &c. Now I say again, the Lord rebuke thee, Satan, who sits with such extreme malice and soul-killing folly in the hearts and heads of such miserable men, whom thou so sottishly hoodwinks, and hardens to the height for a most desperate downfall and horrible confusion at last.

Were now the glorified soul of that blessed saint consulted with and asked, Didst thou ever receive hurt by reading God’s blessed book; by searching sweetly into the great mystery of Christ crucified; by meditation upon heavenly things? Did the sacred sense of those divine oracles unsettle thy noble faculties, or ever make sad thy heart? &c. Oh! with what infinite indignation would it fly in the face of such cursed cavillers and wranglers against the truth.

Is it possible for the sole and sovereign antidote sent from heaven by God himself against the sting and venom of all heart grief and horror, the sacred sun of saving truth, which is only able to ennoble and glorify our understandings with wisdom from the breast of the everlasting counsel of Jesus Christ, should become the cause of discomfort and dissettlement of the soul? No, no. There is such a quickening, healing, and mighty efficacy and vigour shed into it from the Father of lights, and shining in it from the face of Christ, that by the help of the blessed Spirit, it can turn darkness into light, death into life, hell into heaven, the deepest horror into height of joy. Tell me of any misery upon the

body, soul, outward state, or good name; any calamity felt or feared in this life, or the life to come; and if thou wilt be converted and counselled, I can send thee to some, both promise and precedent in this book of God, which may upon good ground fill thine heart as full with sound comfort, as the sun is of light, and the sea of waters. Nay, give me a wounded spirit with all its inexplicable terrois and bitterness, which is the greatest misery and extremest affliction of which an understanding soul is capable in this life; and let first all the physicians in the world lay all their heads, skill, and experience together for the cure; let all the highest monarchs upon earth shine upon it with their imperial favours for comfort; let the depth of all human wisdom and the height of the most excellent oratory be improved to persuade it to peace; let all the creatures in heaven and earth contribute their several abilities and utmost to still its rage; and when all these have done, and have done just nothing, I will fetch a cordial out of God's own book which shall mollify the anguish, expel the venom, and bind it up with everlasting peace which passeth all understanding; that the broken bones may rejoice, and the poor soul groaning most grievously under the guilty horror of many foul abominations, and ready to sink into the gulph of despair, be sweetly bathed and refreshed in the fountain opened by the hand of mercy for sin and for uncleanness, Christ's dearest blood, the glorious well-spring of all lightsomeness and joy.

Hear how precisely for this purpose, and how punctually against such pestilent cavillers, some of the ancient fathers do puritanize:—

“There is no malady,” saith Chrysostom\*, “either of body or soul, but may receive a medicine out of God's book. One comes oppressed with sadness and anxiety of business, overwhelmed with grief; but presently hearing the prophet saying, ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God’ (Psalm xlii, 11); he receives abundance of comfort, and abandons all heaviness of heart. Another is pinched with extreme poverty; takes it heavily, and grieves, seeing others flowing in riches, swelling with pride, attended with great pomp and state; but he also hears the same prophet saying, ‘Cast thy burthen upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee’ (Psalm lv, 22); and again, ‘Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased: for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away:

\* Chrysost. on Gen. Hom. 29.

his glory shall not descend after him' (Psalm xlix, 16, 17). There is another which, assaulted with insinuations and calumnies, is much troubled, thinks his life uncomfortable, finding no help in man. He is also taught by the same prophet, that in such perplexities we must not resort to the arm of flesh. Hear what he saith: 'They slandered, and I prayed. 'The mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love, they are my adversaries; but I give myself unto prayer' (Psalm cix, 2, 3, 4). Another is slighted and contemned by some base contemptible underlings and forsaken of his friends; and that is it which most troubles his mind and goes nearest to his heart. But he also, if he will come hither, doth hear that blessed man saying, 'My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off. They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. For in thee, O Lord, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God' (Psalm xxxviii, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15)." He concludes thus:—

"Thou hast seen, how that any misery pressing our mortality, a convenient antidote may be taken out of scripture, and all the gnawing cares of this life may be cured; neither need we to be grieved for any thing which befalls us: therefore, I beseech you, that henceforward you would come hither, and listen diligently to the reading of divine writ. And not only when you come hither, but also take the Bible into your hands at home, and receive with great affection the profit to be found in it: for from thence springs much gain. First, that the tongue may be reformed by it: the soul also takes wings, soars aloft, and is gloriously enlightened with the beams of the sun of righteousness, and for a time is freed from the enticements of impure thoughts, enjoying much calmness and contentment. Furthermore, that which corporal food doth for increasing bodily strength, the same doth reading perform to the soul."

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, and writ by the Spirit of God for this purpose," saith the great Basil\*, "that in it, as a common mart of soul-medicines, every one of us may choose a medicine proper and fit for his spiritual malady."

\* Basil on Psalm i.

Jerome, writing to many even of her sex whom as I told you before much reading of scriptures and other good books made mad, if the extremest malice of the most mortal enemies to the ways of God may be credited, doth stir them up with extraordinary earnestness to a diligent, industrious, and fruitful reading of God's book, in many passages of his epistles.

In that to Gaudentius, about bringing up a young maiden, "he would have her at seven years old, and when she begins to blush, learn the Psalms of David without book; and until twelve make the books of Solomon, the gospels, the apostles, and prophets, the treasure of her heart."

To one he speaks thus: "This one thing above all others I would foreadvise thee; and inculcating it I will admonish again and again, that thou wouldst possess thy mind with love of reading scriptures."

To another: "Let the book of God be ever in thy hands.—And after the Holy Scriptures read also the treatises of learned men."

To another: "Let the sacred scriptures be ever in thine hands, and revolved continually in thy mind."

"Reading scripture," saith Origen, "daily prayers, the word of doctrine, nourish the soul, even as the body is strengthened by dainty fare. The spirit is nourished, grows strong, and is made victorious by such food, which if you use not, do not complain of the infirmity of the flesh; do not say, we would, but cannot." &c.

Those reverend men that made the homilies seem to apprehend themselves, and they commend to us the excellent sweetness which may be sucked from the breasts of consolation in meditating upon the scriptures, by this their emphatical and effectual expression: "Let us ruminare," say they\*, "and as it were chew the cud, that we may have the sweet juice, spiritual effect, marrow, honey, kernel, taste, comfort, and consolation of them."

I have said all this upon purpose, lest melancholic men should be misled or disheartened by the cursed counsel of carnal friends and wicked clamours of the world, from turning their sadness into sorrow for sin, and from using God's blessed book and the powerful ministry thereof, the only well-spring of all true lightsomeness and joy; and able, as I said before, if they will be converted and counselled, to dispel the very darkness of hell out of their hearts. Methinks they, above all others, should be encouraged hereunto, (1.) Because they have a passive advantage, if I

\* Homily for Reading of Scriptures.

may so speak, when it pleaseth God to sanctify for that purpose and set on work the spirit of bondage, by reason of their sad dispositions and fearful spirits, to be sooner affrighted and dejected by comminations of judgment against sin, more feelingly to take to heart the miseries and dangers of their natural state; more easily to tremble and stoop under the mighty hand of God and hammer of his law. Guiltiness and horror, damnation and hell, beget in their timorous natures stronger impressions of fear: whereupon they are wont to taste deeper of legal contrition and remorse, and so proportionably to feel and acknowledge a greater necessity of Jesus Christ; to thirst after him more greedily; to prize him more highly, and at length to throw their trembling souls into his blessed bosom with more eagerness and importunity. And having once entered into the holy path, their native fearfulness being rectified, and turned the right way, they many times walk on afterward with more fear to offend (and "happy is the man that feareth alway"), more watchfulness over their ways, tenderness of conscience, impatience of losing spiritual peace, sensibleness of infirmities and failings, reverence of God's word, &c. (2.) And because of all others such men have most need of lightsomeness and refreshing, which when carnal counsellors and flattering mountebanks of the ministry labour to introduce into their dark heads and heavy hearts by the arm of flesh, outward mirth, and such other means, they only palliate and daub, and are so far from doing any true good, that thereby they drown them many times deeper and more desperately in the dungeon of melancholy afterward. So that a melancholic man, let him turn him which way he will, is likely, without the light of grace, to live a very miserable life upon earth, and as it were in some part of hellish darkness, to which also at length shall be added the torment, if he die impenitently. But now let them address themselves to the "book of life," and thence only they may "suck and be satisfied with the breasts of consolation." Let them lean their sorrowful souls (improving natural sadness to mourn more heartily for sin) upon the promises there, and every several one will shine upon them with a particular heavenly and healing light, with sound and lasting joy. All those then are stark mad, either with ignorant or learned malice, who would persuade the world that reading the scriptures, attending a powerful ministry, taking sin to heart, &c. will make melancholic men mad.

If you desire to know before I pass out of this point, the differences between the heaviness of a melancholic humour

and affliction of conscience for sin, take notice of such as these :

[1.] Terror for sin springs out of the conscience, and from the smart of a spiritual wound there. Melancholy dwells and hath its chief residence in the imagination, and uncomfortably overcasts and darkens the splendour and light-  
someness of the animal spirits in the brain.

[2.] The melancholy man is extremely sad, and knows not why. He is full of fear, doubts, distrust, and heaviness, without any true and just ground, arising only from the darkness and disorder of the imagination, the grisly fumes of that black humour in the brain. But a broken heart, in almost every case, can readily tell you the particular sins, the crying abomination, the legal hammer, and ministerial hand that made it bleed. His trouble is ever upon cause clear and evident, and the greatest that ever brought misery upon mankind, weight of sin and the wrath of God. A melancholic man will ride many miles, walk many hours, and at length be able to give no account of the exercise and discourse of his mind, or what his thoughts have been all the while. But he that is troubled in mind for sin can, for the most part, tell with certainty, and recount exactly to his spiritual physician the several temptations, suggestions, and injections; the hideous conflicts with Satan; his objections, exceptions, replies, methods, devices, and depths, which have afflicted his heavy spirit, since the first enlightening, convincing, and affrighting his awaked and working conscience.

[3.] The soul may be seized upon with terror of conscience and spiritual distemper, the body being sound and in good temper; in excellency of health, purity of blood, symmetry of parts, vivacity of spirit, &c. But the horrors of melancholy are wont to haunt corrupted constitutions; where obstructions hinder the free passage of the humours and spirits, the blood is overgross and thick, &c.

[4.] Melancholy makes a man almost mad with imaginary fears, and strange chimeras of horror which have no being, but only in the monstrous compositions of a darkened and distempered brain. He is many times, by the predominancy of that cowardly humour, afraid of every man, of every thing, of any thing; of a shadow, of the shaking of a leaf, of his own hands, of his own heart. He fears where no fear is, where there is no probability, no possibility, even in the very midst of security. His fear sometimes is so extremely foolish, that he can hear of no fearful thing fallen upon others, but he thinks verily the very same thing shall befall him; so prodigious, that some of them, thinking

their feet to be of glass, have been afraid to walk ; others, imagining themselves to be noted for lepers, durst not come into any company, &c. But now a troubled conscience is ordinarily fearless of any thing but the anger of God. Bodily tortures, outward trouble, tyrant's threats, even the prince of terror, death itself, in his apprehension and eye would be as nothing to the guilty glance of one cursed lust. He would not care or fear, though all the creatures in Christendom were turned into bears or devils about him, so that all were well at home. If he could get into his bosom that sweet peace which passeth all understanding, oh ! then would he be more than conqueror over the whole world and ten thousand hells.

[5.] Melancholy may be something abated, the brain cleared, the heart eased, by the aid and excellency of the art of physic. But in the case of a wounded conscience, there is no help under heaven to be had. No friends nor physic ; no mirth nor music ; no princely favour nor dainty fare, can possibly give any ease at all. Nay, they will all far rather enrage the wound than weaken the rage. It is Christ, Christ, and nothing but Christ, which can comfort in this confusion of spirit.

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## CHAP. VI.

Two other cases wherein Spiritual Physicians must take heed of the  
Second Error.

3. WHEN complaint of sin is confusedly only and in general. " Many deal with God and his ministers in confession of their sins," saith a good divine, " as Nebuchadnezzar with his enchanters about his dream that he had dreamed ; he told them and desired an interpretation ; but what his dream was he could not tell." So many confess themselves sinners, and cry out that they are grievous offenders, and desire pardon ; but wherein they have sinned, and what their sins are, they cannot or will not tell. And how is it possible the physician should help him who only saith he is not well, but will not tell him where ? I have sometimes visited those, who being pressed to a sight and sense of their sinfulness and cursedness, upon purpose to fit them for Christ, have acknowledged in general that they were sinners, but descending to the particulars of the law (which was horrible to hear) justified themselves throughout. Of which extreme spiritual misery and prodigious madness, *ignorance*

(though I know Satan manageth that and all other advantages with all the malice and cunning he can possibly, to the overthrow of souls) is the principal ground ; the prime, but pestilent occasion : I say *ignorance*, which though it be not perhaps so much talked of, taxed, and taken to heart as others, yet is a loud crying sin of the kingdom. For it is a most incredible thing, and of infinite amazement, how universally it reigns in this glorious noontide of the gospel ; and therefore must needs provoke God mightily, and hasten the “ removing of our candlestick.” And in the mean time, besides many more, and that dreadful doom at last (2 Thes. i, 7, 8) it brings upon most (more is the pity and shame, especially so glorious beams of a blessed ministry shining about us) these two special mischiefs ; which at this time I only mention, because they serve fittest for illustration of the point. First, ignorant people sticking fast in his clutches, stand all at the devil’s mercy and devotion to do with them what he will ; even as a poor helpless lamb in the paw of a lion, or a silly wren in the ravenous claw of a kite ; to slash and mangle their woful souls at his pleasure, with a cursed variety of innumerable sins ; they, in the mean time, which is the perfection of their misery, neither fearing nor feeling any hurt at all, by reason of the hellish mists and miserable lethargy of spiritual blindness, which makes them sightless and senseless. Secondly, when times of sorrow come upon them, when melancholy and old age grows on, and they say unto the world upon which they have doated all their life long, I have no pleasure in thee ; when losses, crosses, and heavy accidents befall them ; when hideous injections, temptations to self-murder, despair, &c. press them full sore, and they thereupon begin to cast about seriously, and to conceive with great terror and anxiety of spirit what is likely to become of them in the other world ; then, in such extremity, and forced by necessity, they are wont to have recourse to ministers for ease and help ; and, alas ! then we are at our wits’ end, and in much perplexity how to deal, and what to do with them. For upon the first entrance into a discovery of their spiritual state, we see evidently, with grief of heart, that their ignorance hath betrayed them to the devil, and now in the evil day exposed them to merciless cruelty and cunning ; even as if a man should commit a ship without sails, rudder, pilot, &c. to the rage and roaring of the tempestuous devouring sea ; or put a poor weak naked man into the field against an implacable mighty adversary, completely armed from top to toe. We tell them truly, that the true way to comfort is to repent and believe. But for the first, by reason of the

sottish disacquaintance with themselves, with their miserable sinful natural state, and their gross ignorance in the law and word of God, they only cry out in the general they are very grievous sinners; but to descend to any competent examination of the conscience, search of their souls by the sight of the law, particular survey of their sins, and so to special repentance, because of their spiritual blindness they are utterly unable. Nay, many in this case are so destitute of matter of humiliation for sin, that they can scarcely tell you what sin is. At the most they have not learned, or think that there is any other breach of the *seventh* commandment, but the gross acts of uncleanness; that there is any sin against the *ninth*, but giving in false witness against their neighbours in open court. They look no further into the *sixth* commandment, but unto actual murder by the hand; into the *third*, but to blasphemy and swearing; and so proportionably in the other commandments. For the other also, although they have heard much of Jesus Christ, and if he be talked of, pretend a very foolish and false presumption of having part in him; yet to the knowledge of his person, offices, excellency, sweetness, effectual ministry, and of his whole *mystery*, they are mere strangers. And so, when they should now upon this occasion of trouble of mind, be brought by knowledge and application of the law and gospel, through the pangs of the new birth into the holy path, they are to begin to learn the very first principles of religion; in which they have not so much skill (I speak a reproachful thing) as I could teach a child of five or six years old in a few days. Now when the old red dragon hath drawn them into the lists, armed with all the power and policy of hell, and furnished with all his fiery darts, they are so far from ability to put on and manage the whole spiritual armour with dexterity and wisdom, that they are stark idiots and infants in the very speculative knowledge of the nature and use of every piece thereof. They have no skill at all at that excellent, invincible weapon, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," by which Jesus Christ foiled that foul fiend in the most hideous and horrible temptations that were ever suggested to the mind of man; and therefore he doth bring them too often thus blindfolded and baffled to perish in a most desperate manner, both temporally and eternally.

The pharisees, papists, and our ordinary ignorants, are all foully faulty this way. They love and labour to inquire and look no further into God's law than to the gross acts and greatest transgressions only. If they find themselves free from these, they, out of a most absurd and sot-

tish self-conceitedness, justify and applaud themselves as no such enormous and dangerous delinquents. Hence it was, that Christ teaches and tells the pharisees, that not only the gross act of adultery was to be taken notice of, but also that even a lascivious and lustful look after a woman was a transgression of that law, and to be taken to heart as adultery before God. That not only killing a man in the literal sense, but also rash anger in the heart, railing, and reviling speeches; nay, even a frowning face, a contemptuous gesture, discovering inward rancour and rage, kill the soul, and cast into hell, &c. Hence it was that Bellarmine, as the grand impostor and poisoner, so the great pharisee of Christendom, upon his bed of death "could hardly find what to confess, or any matter of absolution." Prodigious pharisaism! Of which hear some passages from the reporter of his death\*.

"Such was the innocency of this man (to wit, Bellarmine), that albeit he was in his perfect sense, yet could he hardly find what to confess; insomuch as his ghostly father was in some perplexity, as wanting matter of absolution, till by recourse to his life past he found some small defects, of which he absolved him."

"'Now nothing troubles my conscience. For God (his goodness be still thanked therefore) hath so preserved me hitherto, as I do not remember in the whole course of my life ever to have committed any scandalous action.' How holy was his life; not stained with mortal sin! How secure a conscience, that had at his death no scruple; but for the exchange of one good work for another, &c. This holy man began his prayers, said the *Paternoster* and *Ave Maria*, and began again the *Paternoster*; which being ended he said distinctly the psalm *Miserere* to the end: and being warned to say also the *Creed*, &c. said it all through, and with the end of the *Creed* ended his speech. His last words were, '*vitam æternam. Amen.*'"

Hence it is, that carnal men are well enough content to hear the commandments read, and perhaps will be angry if at any time they be omitted. Would you know the reason? They go along with the minister, and applaud themselves pharisaically all the while; saying secretly and securely to their own souls, We thank God we are no image worshippers, no murderers, no adulterers, &c.; and so depart home from time to time as highly conceited of themselves, and yet more horribly deceived, than that pharisee (Luke xviii, 11, 12), of whose outward religious, charitable, and righ-

\* Bellarmine's Death, by C. J. a Jesuit.

teous performances they come far short. But they cannot possibly with any patience endure a particular unfolding and powerful application of God's law after Christ's manner (Matt. v); a punctual survey of their sinful states and special search into their lives and hearts. This cutting, yet reasonable course, stirs up and raises in them the ill-spirits of murmuring, cavilling, reviling, and perhaps persecuting the faithful messengers of God as a generation of terrible teachers. To expositions, exercises, and considerations of this nature they are drawn with very ill will and much ado, even as a bankrupt to his accopt book, a foul face to the looking glass, and a traitor to the rack.

By reason of this affected ignorance in the law of God, and lothness to descend to particulars, it comes to pass that many in trouble of mind complain of sin only in general and confusedly; and thereupon, as though they were competently cast down, expect comfort, and perhaps many draw it from some daubers; whereas particularizing of our sins is a necessary precedent and preparative to a sound humiliation. And therefore in this case we must deal with such as surgeons are wont to do with a tumour or swelling in the body, who first apply to the affected place drawing and ripening plaisters to bring the sore to a head, that the corruption may have issue, and then heal. So a general complaint of sin and confused grief must be reduced to particulars. It is a principle in the mystery of Christ, resolved upon by the best divines rightly instructed to the kingdom of heaven, "that a confused acknowledgment and general repentance only for known sins is never sound and saving; but only common, formal, careless, and that of counterfeit converts, not truly touched with sense of their sins, nor heartily resolved to forsake their pleasures." If they can be first brought to the sight, sense, and acknowledgment of some one special notorious sin which hath most reigned in their heart, life, or calling; and be in some good measure enlightened, convinced, and terrified about the heinousness and horrible guilt of it, it may be a good means by God's blessing to bring in the rest. For ordinarily true repentance is first occasioned by some one special sin laid to heart. The apostles (Acts ii) do specially press the murder of Christ upon the Jews; Christ himself, adultery upon the woman of Samaria (John iv); Samuel, idolatry upon the Israelites (1 Sam. vii); the sin of asking a king (chap. xii); Ezra, taking strange wives (Ezra x); Nehemiah, usury (Neh. v).

To further the work of a more particular "setting their sins in order before their eyes," it were much to be wished

and a very happy thing if all the wounded consciences and troubled in mind we meet with, were furnished beforehand with a competent speculative knowledge at the least of the particulars in God's law, exorbitant passages of their life, and gross corruptions of their hearts. We might so, by God's help, more easily bring them to particular remorse, and fit them sooner and more seasonably for comfort. We find it a most hard and heavy task to encounter the devil's devices, wiles, and depths in a poor distressed, tempted ignorant.

4. When the party is dejected for some notorious sin only. It is sometimes seen in mere civil men, that having a long time preserved their reputations entire and unstained in the eye of the world from gross and notable enormities, and yet after foully shaming themselves in the sight of men by some infamous fall, seem to grieve much, as though they were truly troubled with remorse; whereas, perhaps the present heart's-grief ariseth rather from loss of credit than wound of conscience, though to favour their credit they cunningly father it upon conscience. Or let them be indeed affrighted very grievously for a time with the horror of that one sin, yet stay the cry and abate the rage of that one with some superficial comfort, and they are healed and put into a happy case in their own conceit, and in the opinion also perhaps of their unskilful physician; though they search no further and dive no deeper into the loathsome dunghill of those many abominable lusts and corruptions in their heart and life, of which they are as full as the skin will hold.

Now it is a foul and fearful oversight in a minister, nay, it may prove an error stained with spiritual bloodshed, to promise pardon to such partial penitents.

Suppose a man sick of the pleurisy should send to a physician, and tell him he is sore troubled with a cough, and entreat his help, concealing other signs and symptoms which ordinarily accompany that disease; as his short and difficult breathing, the stinging stitch in his side, &c.; the physician may address himself to cure the cough, and yet the patient die of an inflammation seized upon the membrane girding the ribs and sides. It is proportionably so in the present point. A man may complain and cry out, howl and lament extremely for some one horrible heinous sin, and that may be well; but except he proceed to a further discovery, and sorrow proportionably for his other known sins, they will be the destruction and death of his soul. If a dozen thieves be entered into thy house, it is not enough for thee to lay hold on the captain thief only, and thrust him

out at doors ; if thou suffer but one of them to lurk in any corner undiscovered and not turned out, he will suffice to cut thy throat and take away thy treasure. Crying out of one capital sin only is not sufficient, we must confess and forsake all, if we look to find mercy (Prov. xxviii, 13).

And yet here I would have no true penitent dejected or mistake ; the bare omission of some particular sins in this case is not ever damnable. For we must know, that if a man deal truly with his own heart in a sincere acknowledgment, confession, and repentance for discovered and known sins (and he ought to labour by clearing the eye of natural conscience and industrious inspection intō God's pure law, to know as many as may be), and for all those that come into his mind, when he sets himself apart solemnly to humble and afflict his soul before God (and he ought to remember as many as he can possibly) ; I say, if so, then for secret and unknown sins, which are committed in weakness and ignorance, the Lord accepteth a general confession, as we see in David's practice, " Who can understand his errors ? Cleanse thou me from secret faults " (Psalm xix, 12). Sins there are many, and that in the best men, which are not only unnoted of others and free from the world's observation, but even unknown to a man's own self, and invisible to the watchfullest eye of the most waking conscience ; which notwithstanding are clearly subject to the search of God's all-seeing eye, and to the censure of his pure majesty. " For hell and destruction are before the Lord, how much more the most secret ways of the sons of men ? " Sins there are also, which even in the zealous exercise and holy work of repentance may not come into the consideration and remembrance of one truly penitent, which if he could recover into his memory, he would heartily and with much indignation acknowledge, bewail, and detest : so unnumbered are the cursed bye-paths of men's crooked ways. But for both these sorts of sins I must say thus much for the comfort of the true convert ; that both those unknown sins which he commits of ignorance, if he truly repent for all his known sins, and labour with sincerity and zeal for further illumination of conscience and fuller revelation of every corrupt passage both in heart and life, in judgment and practice ; and those sins of knowledge also, which came not into his mind, if with diligence and without dissimulation, with hearty prayer and best intention of spirit, he endeavour to recover them into his memory, that he might also mourn for and mortify them with the rest, carrying ever in his heart this resolution, that as any sin shall be discovered to his conscience, or return into his mind, he will abominate

and abandon it ; I say, both these kinds of sins (it is a pearl for the true penitent ; let no stranger meddle with it) to such an one, upon such conditions, are most certainly washed away by Christ's blood, and God's free mercy, upon his general confession and repentance. David's petition, "O cleanse thou me from my secret faults," did assuredly prevail with God for the forgiveness of all his unknown sins, and shall be powerful for that end to the world's end, to all those that so pray with David's spirit, and sincerely.

Besides these two cases ; first, want of knowledge ; and secondly, want of remembrance in the sense I have said ; there is also a third, and that is want of time, which if truly so, doth also sometimes excuse the omission of some particular sins. As we may see in the thief upon the cross. For want of leisure, he could not possibly punctually revise his vile abominable life, nor peruse with remorse all the particulars of his former wicked and abhorred courses ; but he had infused into his soul by Jesus Christ an habitual grace of true repentance, which, if he had lived, would have carried him faithfully along over all the notorious passages of his lewd and loathsome life, with a truly contrite, broken, and bleeding soul. So that if he had had space, I doubt not but he would have proved a very eminent, extraordinary, and exemplary penitent ; and therefore the Lord in mercy did graciously accept the desire and purpose, the inclination and preparation of his heart that way.

But to return to the point, and give my advice in the case proposed :—

Let the party who so grieves for some notorious sin only, and there takes up his rest, be told, that though he dwell with deepest sighs, heaviest heart, and saltest tears upon some of his greatest and most special sins, yet the rest must by no means be neglected. That which is most crying and crimson must serve as a crier, if I may so speak, to summon the rest into the court of conscience ; and as a remembrancer to bring them to mind and remorse ; as David's murder and adultery brought even his birth sin into his memory (Psalm li) ; and that sin of strange wives, many other sins to Ezra's mind (Ezra ix). When a father beats his child for some one special fault, he is wont to remember unto him and reckon with him for many former misdemeanors also. When a bankrupt is once shut up for one principal debt, the rest of his creditors ordinarily come thick and threefold upon him. When once thou beginnest to reckon with thy conscience for some one extraordinary rebellion, never cease until thou hast searched thoroughly, and ransacked it to the bottom, that it may smart soundly

before thou hast done, with penitent anguish and true remorse for all thy other sinful corruptions also. When horror for some one heinous sin hath seized upon thy heart, follow God's blessed hand leading thee to conversion, and through the pangs of the new birth to unspeakable and glorious joy, by giving way to all the rest to bring in their several indictments against thy soul. And be not afraid thus to arraign, cast, and condemn thyself as guilty of innumerable sins, and worthy ten thousand hells before God's just tribunal. For then shalt thou there most certainly find a gracious advocate at his right hand; to whom if thou make suit and seek in truth, he will by the plea and price of his own precious blood, sue out a pardon for thine everlasting peace. When the guilty rage of thy reigning corruption begins to press upon thy conscience, lay on more weight still by a penitent addition and painful apprehension of all thy other sins, that growing very sensible of thy spiritual slavery, weary of the dungeon of lewdness and lust, sensuality and death, wherein the devil hath kept thee long; and thine heart being happily broken and bruised to the bottom, and scorched as it were in some measure with hellish flames of guilty horror, thou mayest see and feel the greater necessity of Jesus Christ, set him at a higher price, with more eagerness and impatience thirst for his righteousness and blood; long for spiritual enlargement more than for worlds of pleasures, glory, or wealth; relish the hidden manna of the promises more eagerly, and cast thy wounded and bleeding soul with more delight and sweetness into his blessed arms of mercy and love. For, "O how acceptable is the fountain of living waters," saith a worthy divine, "to the chased and panting hart! the blood of Christ to the weary and tired soul! to the thirsty conscience scorched with the sense of God's wrath! He that presents him with it, how welcome is he! Even as a special choice man; one of a thousand. The deeper the sense of misery, the sweeter is the sense of mercy. The traitor laid down upon the block is more sensible of his sovereign's mercy in pardoning, than he who is not yet seized. In our dead security before conversion, God is fain to let the law, sin, conscience, Satan, a deep sense of our abominable and cursed state, loose upon us, and to kindle the very fire of hell in our souls, that so we might be roused, and afterward more sweetly and soundly raised and refreshed. For after the most toilsome labour is the sweetest sleep; after the greatest tempests the stillest calms. Sanctified troubles and terrors establish the surest peace; and the shaking of these winds makes the trees of God's Eden take the deeper rooting."

I confess, that commonly true converts at the first touch and turning, and after too, cry out most of, and are extraordinarily troubled with, some one capital sin, and that which in their days of darkness and vanity wasted their conscience most, and detained them with strongest enticements and holdfast in the devil's bondage. Hence it was that Zaccheus was so ready and willing to restore fourfold, that so he might be rid of the sting and horror of his former reigning sin (Luke xix, 8); that blessed Paul, as it seems, amongst other dreadful apprehensions of his former unregenerate courses, was so much vexed and wounded in heart for that he had been a *persecutor* (1 Tim. i, 13; 1 Cor. xv, 9). But yet should they lament never so much, howl and roar for that one sin; if besides they did not by the conduct of the blessed Spirit, descend also to a more particular acknowledgment, confession, and repentance of all other known sins (and they ought by clearing the eye of natural conscience, industrious inspection into the pure crystal of God's law, discover as many as they can possibly), all were nothing. "He which is grieved," say divines, "for one sin truly and unfeignedly from his heart, will proportionably be grieved for all the sins that he knoweth to be in himself." If we favour any one sin in our heart, or life, or calling, we cannot enjoy God's favour. If there be any sensual lust, or secret corruption, which a man purposely labours to cover and conceal from God's pure eye, the search of his word, and mortifying grace, what hope can he have that it is covered with the blood of Christ from the wrath that is to come, or warranted by any promise of grace from the damnation of hell? In a true penitent there ought to be an utter cessation from all gross abominable sins; and at least disallowance, disaffection, and all possible opposition even to unavoidable infirmities and inseparable frailties of the flesh.

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## CHAP. VII.

A Fifth Case wherein spiritual Physicians must take heed of that second Error. The divers kinds of Death in Godly Men.

5. WHEN the physician of the soul promiseth mercy and pardon at random, without that spiritual discretion which is convenient for a matter of so great consequence, and requiring such a deal of dexterity in discerning to a man upon his bed of death, who hath formerly been notorious, or only civil, howsoever a mere stranger to the power of

godliness and the truth of profession, because now in the evil day he grieves extremely by reason of his extremity, cries out of his sins, "O, I am an heinous, horrible, and grievous sinner! If I were to live again what would not I do!" A world for comfort now, and "to die the death of the righteous;" because he howls upon his bed, as the prophet speaketh, and breaks out oftentimes into a roaring complaint of sin and cry for pardon, by reason he now begins to fear and feel the revenging hand of God ready to seize upon him for his former rebellions, &c. Or when he assures him, having been a formal professor only and "foolish virgin," of bliss and glory; because out of a former habituated spiritual self-deceit<sup>h</sup> he cries, "Lord, Lord;" seems to bystanders very confident that he shall presently receive a crown of life; thanks God that nothing troubles him, professes to every one that comes to visit him that he believes and repents with all his heart, forgives all the world, makes no doubt of heaven, &c.

Here, by the way, we must take notice, that many having outstood the day of their gracious visitation, having "neglected so great salvation, forsaken their own mercy, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life" all their life long, by standing out against the ministry of the word, in respect of any saving work upon their souls; and now at length being overtaken, after the short gleam of worldly prosperity, with the boisterous winter-night of death and darkness of the evil day, may keep a great stir upon their dying beds, or in some great extremity, with grievous complaints of their present intolerable misery and former sinful courses procuring it, with incessant cries for ease and deliverance, being now caught like wild bulls in a net, full of the wrath of God, with earnest and eager suing and seeking for pardon and salvation, now when worldly pleasures are past; and yet be not truly penitent, not soundly and savingly humbled, not rightly fitted for Christ and comfort. Consider for this purpose Prov. i, 24, 28. In the day of visitation God called upon them and stretched out his hand, but they refused, did not regard; set at nought all his counsel, and would none of his reproof; and therefore in the day of vexation, when extremity and anguish shall come upon them like a thief in the night, a whirlwind, travail upon a woman, suddenly, extremely, unavoidably, he professeth beforehand, that then they shall call upon him, but<sup>h</sup> he will not answer; they shall seek him early, but they shall not find him. When God's hand was upon them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God, &c. "Nevertheless, they did flatter him with

their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues ; for their heart was not right with him," &c. (Psalm lxxviii, 34, 35, 36, 37). "They howled upon their beds" (Hos. vii, 14). Will not a dog or a beast, or any irrational creature, when they are in extremity, will they not cry, will they not moan for help? Their cries in the evil day were not hearty prayers, but howlings upon their beds. Their earnestness in such a case is ordinarily like the tears, prayers, and cries of a malefactor newly condemned. He is very earnest with the judge to spare him ; he roars out sometimes, and grieves extremely, yet not heartily, for his former lewdness ; but horribly, because he must now lose his life. He seems now, when he sees his misery, to relent, and to be touched with remorse ; but it is only because he is likely to be hanged. Again, many there are, who satisfying themselves and others with a goodly show of a form only of godliness, may upon their last bed discover and represent to bystanders a great deal of fearlessness about their spiritual state, much confidence, many ostentations of faith and full assurance, and behave themselves as though they were most certainly going to everlasting bliss, when, as God knows, their answer at his just tribunal must be, "I know you not ;" and in truth and trial they have no more part in Christ, nor other portion in heaven, than the foolish virgins, and those, Luke xiii, 26, 27. They are so confident, not because they have escaped the danger, but because they never saw the danger ; and hence it is, that many of them die with as much confidence as the best Christians ; they have no more trouble than holy men. To be sure I am free from danger, and not to know my danger, may beget equal confidence.

Now concerning the present case, I must tell you, that for my part, I would not much alter my opinion of a man's spiritual state whom I have thoroughly known before, for the manner of his death. The end of God's dearest servant, after a holy life and unblameable conversation, may not appear in the eye of man so calm and comfortable as was expected ; by reason of much tenderness of conscience, some strong temptation, spiritual desertion, violent distemper of body ; or because God would have the manner of his death serve the glory of his justice in hardening those about him who were so far from being won by his godly life that they heartily hated it ; or for some other secret and sacred end, seen and seeming good to Divine wisdom, who ever disposeth every circumstance even of the least affair most sweetly and wisely. And yet this, as it doth not prejudice his salvation, neither should it his Christian reputation.

Hear that great doctor in the art of rightly comforting afflicted consciences, Greenham, in his *Grave Counsel and Godly Observation*: "But what if you should die in this discomfort? For my part (as I myself look for no great things in my death) I would not think more hardly of you; neither would I wish any to judge otherwise of God's child in that state of death. For we shall not be judged according to that particular instant of death, but according to our general course of life; not according to our deed in that present, but according to the desire of our hearts ever before. And therefore we are not to mistrust God's mercy in death, be we never so uncomfortable, if so be it hath been before sealed in our vocation and sanctification."

On the other side, a notorious wretch, who hath swam down the current of the times, and wallowed in worldly pleasures all his life long, may seem to die penitently, and resolvedly to be reformed if he recover; and yet his sorrow of mind may be such only as the terrors of an awakened guilty conscience produce; and his resolution to cast away his sins, only such as a man hath in a storm to cast away his goods, not because he doth not love them, but because he feareth to lose his life if he part not with them. Or a mere civil man, or formal professor, may upon his bed of death be very confident and seem to be full of comfort, and yet that confidence no other than the strong imaginary joyful conceit of a covetous man grasping a great deal of gold in a dream, but when he awaketh, behold his hands are empty.

For a more full and clear apprehension of my meaning and judgment in the point, let us take a survey of the different and several kinds of death which ordinarily befall the godly and the wicked.

The deaths of God's children are divers:—

(1.) Some of their holy and zealous lives do determine and expire sweetly, fairly, and gloriously, even like a clear sun in a summer's evening, without any storm or cloud of temptation and discomfort. The darksome and painful passages and pangs of death are enlightened and sweetened with the shining beams of God's glorious presence, and fast embracement of Jesus Christ in the arms of their faith. So that to them the very joys of heaven and exultations of everlasting rest mingle themselves with those last agonies and expirations of death. Their heads are, as it were, crowned with immortality and endless peace upon their beds of death. Luther, that blessed man of God, died sweetly and triumphantly over hell, the pope, and the devil. "My heavenly Father," said he at his death, "eternal and merciful God, thou hast manifested unto me thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus

Christ. I have taught him, I have known him, I love him as my life, my health, and my redemption, whom the wicked have persecuted, maligned, and with injury afflicted. Draw my soul to thee." After this he said as ensues thrice. "I commend my spirit into thine hands; thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that all that believe in him should have life everlasting" (John iii, 16). Hear how another blessed saint of God \* ended his days: "Having the day before he died continued his meditations and exposition upon Rom. viii, for the space of two hours more, on the sudden he said, 'O stay your reading. What brightness is this I see? Have you lighted up any candles?' To which I answered, 'No; it is the sun-shine;' for it was about five o'clock in a clear summer's evening. 'Sunshine,' saith he, 'nay, my Saviour-shine. Now, farewell world; welcome heaven; the day star from on high hath visited my heart. O speak it when I am gone, and preach it at my funeral, God dealeth familiarly with man. I feel his mercy, I see his majesty; whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell. God, he knoweth; but I see things that are unutterable.' So ravished in spirit he roamed towards heaven, with a cheerful look, and soft sweet voice, but what he said we could not conceive. With the sun in the morning following, raising himself as Jacob did upon his staff, he shut up his blessed life with these blessed words: 'O what a happy change shall I make! From night to day; from darkness to light; from death to life; from sorrow to solace; from a factious world to a heavenly being! O my dear brethren, sisters, and friends, it pitieth me to leave you behind; yet remember my death when I am gone; and what I now feel, I hope you shall find ere you die, that God doth and will deal familiarly with men! And now thou fiery chariot, that came down to fetch up Elijah, carry me to my happy hold: and all ye blessed angels who attended the soul of Lazarus to bring it up to heaven; bear me, O bear me into the bosom of my best beloved! Amen, Amen, come Lord Jesus, come quickly!' And so he fell asleep." That this is true, the reporter and by-stander, that ancient, learned, and reverend minister of God, Mr Leigh, addeth †, "I say the truth, my brethren, I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost," &c.

(2.) Others may end their days very uncomfortably, in ravings, impatiences, and other strange behaviours. Nay,

\* Mr. John Holland, a faithful minister of God's word.

† In his Sermon, entitled, The Soul's Solace against Sorrow.

the fiery distempers of their hot disease may sometimes even in the saints of God produce furious carriages, fearful distractions, and some despairful speeches. But these being the natural effects and issues of melancholic excesses, frenzies, and burning fevers, are sins of infirmity in sanctified men. For which, if they come again to themselves, they actually repent; if not, they are all undoubtedly by a general habitual repentance and God's gracious acceptance thereof, pardoned by the passion of Christ, and buried for ever in his precious death. That last and irreversible doom at the dreadful tribunal of the ever-living God must pass upon us, not according to the violent and involuntary distempers at our last hour, but according to the former passages of our life, the sinful or sanctified expense of the days of health. Hear that other great artist in the mystery of dealing with troubled consciences \*, "The common opinion is, that if a man die quietly and go away like a lamb, which in some diseases, as consumption and such like, any man may do, then he goes straight to heaven; but if the violence of the disease stir up impatience, and cause frantic behaviours, then men use to say there is a judgment of God, serving either to discover a hypocrite, or to plague a wicked man. But the truth is otherwise; for indeed a man may die like a lamb, and yet go to hell; and one dying in exceeding torments and strange behaviours of the body may go to heaven."

(3.) The death of some others is mixed; to wit, of fearful tempestuous storms, and almost if not altogether despairful agonies in the beginning of their last sickness, and a fair, refreshing, glorious calm and joyful triumph over temptations and fear towards the conclusion of their life. For some secret end and holy purpose, seeming good to his heavenly wisdom, God suffers sometimes even his dearest servants to taste, as it were, of the fire of hell, and for a while to feel in their consciences those infernal flames, as a preparative to drink more sweetly of the well of life and rivers of endless pleasures. So himself is most honoured by helping when all hope is past; the heart of his child more ravished with the first sight of those unutterable joys, being suddenly raised to the height of happiness from the depth of horror; the enemies to the narrow way dashed and confounded by observing his deliverance, whom out of profane blindness they deemed a hypocrite; godly Christians graciously revived when they see, that though the Lord hide his face from his child for a moment, yet at last with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on him; and that

\* Perkins, in his *Salve for a Sick Man*.

he will never utterly and finally forsake any of his. Thus died those blessed servants of God, Mrs. Brettergh, Mr. Peacock, &c. Mrs. Brettergh in the heat of temptation "wished that she had never been born, or that she had been made any other creature rather than a woman." But when that hellish storm was overblown by the return of the glorious beams of the sun of righteousness into her soul, she turned her tune and triumphed thus: "Oh happy am I, that ever I was born to see this blessed day! I confess before the Lord his loving-kindness, and his wonderful works before the sons of men. For he hath satisfied my soul, and filled my hungry soul with goodness."

Mr. Peacock, in the height of his dreadful desertion told those about him, that he "conversed with hell-hounds; that the Lord had cursed him; that he had no grace; that it was against the course of God's proceeding to save him," &c. But when that horrible tempest of spiritual terrors was happily dispersed, and the light of God's comfortable countenance began to shine again upon his most heavy and afflicted spirit, he disavowed all "inconsiderate speeches," as he called them, in his temptation, and did humbly and heartily ask mercy of God for them all, and did thus triumph: "What! should I extol the magnificence of God, which is unspeakable, and more than any heart can conceive? Nay, rather let us with humble reverence acknowledge his great mercy. What great cause have I to magnify the great goodness of God, that hath humbled, nay rather exalted such a wretched miscreant of so base condition to an estate so glorious and stately! The Lord hath honoured me with his goodness. I am sure he hath provided a glorious kingdom for me. The joy which I feel in my heart is incredible."

(4.) Some of God's worthiest champions and most zealous servants do not answer the irreprovable sanctity of their life and unspotted current of their former conversation with those proportionable extraordinary comforts and glorious passages upon their beds of death, which in ordinary congruity might be expected, as a convenient conclusion to the rare and remarkable Christian carriages of such blessed saints. So bottomless and infinitely unfathomable by the utmost of all created understandings are the depths of God's most holy ways and his inscrutable counsels; quite contrary many times to the probable conclusions of man's best wisdom. But every one of his, since he certainly passes through those pangs into pleasures and joys endless and unspeakable, must be content to glorify God and to be serviceable to his secret ends with what kind of death he

please : whether it be glorious and untempted, or discomfortable because of bodily distempers, and consequently uninterpretable by undiscerning spirits ; or mingled of temptations and triumphs ; or ordinary, and without any great show or remarkable speeches, after extraordinary singularities of a holy life, which promised an end of special note and admiration.

Why may not some worthy heavenly-minded Christians sometimes, by strong mortifying meditations and many conquering fore-conceits of death in their life-time, make it beforehand so familiar and easy unto them, and by continual conversing above, and constant peace of conscience, taste so deeply of spiritual joys, that that dreadful passage out of this life, as it may breed no great sense of alteration in themselves, so no extraordinary matter of special observation to others ?

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## CHAP. VIII.

The divers kinds of Death in Wicked Men.

OF the wicked, and those who were ever strangers to the mystery of Christ and truth of godliness, —

(1.) Some die desperately. Though thousands perish by presumption to one of those who despair, yet some there are, to whom, upon their beds of death, all their sins are set in order before them, and represented to the eye of their awaked consciences in such grisly forms and so terribly, that at the very first and fearful sight they are presently struck dead in soul and spirit, utterly overwhelmed and quite swallowed up with guilty and desperate horror. So that afterward no counsel nor comfort ; no consideration of the immeasurableness of God's mercy, of the invaluableness and omnipotency, if I may so speak, of Christ's bloodshed, of the variety and excellency of gracious promises, of the loss of their own immortal souls, can possibly drive and divert from that infinitely false conceit and cursed cry, " My sins are greater than can be pardoned." Whereupon, most miserable and forlorn wretches ! they very wickedly and wilfully throw themselves into hell, as it were, upon earth, and are damned above ground. Thus the Lord sometimes for the terror of others, glorifying his own justice, and bringing exemplary confusion upon impenitent obstinacy in sin, and wilful opposition to grace, doth in greatest indignation by the hand of divine vengeance unclasp unto them

the book of their own conscience and of his own holy law. In one of which they find now at length all their innumerable iniquities, transgressions, and sins engraven with the point of a diamond, enraged with God's implacable wrath, aggravated with the utmost malice of Satan, and never to be razed out or remitted but by the blood of the Son of God, in which they peremptorily profess themselves to have no part. In the other they see the fierceness and fulness of all the curses, plagues, and torments denounced there, and due unto all impenitent sinners, ready to be poured upon their bodies and souls for ever; and no possibility to prevent them, no way to decline them, but by God's infinite bounty through Jesus Christ, in which they also utterly disclaim all right and interest; and therefore they are now finally and desperately resolved to look for no mercy; but in their own judgment and by their own confession stand reprobates from God's covenant, and void of all hope of his inheritance, expecting with unspeakable terror and amazement of spirit the consummation of their misery and fearful sentence of eternal damnation. They are commonly such as have been gross hypocrites like Judas, and lie in some secret abomination against the knowledge of their hearts all their life long; that have followed still their own sensual ways and course of the world against the light of the ministry, standing like an armed man in their consciences to the contrary; who have been scorers and persecutors of the power of godliness and the good way; who have abjured the gospel of Jesus Christ and forsaken the truth for honour, wealth, or worldly happiness; to whom the Lord in their lifetime vouchsafed many mercies, much prosperity, great means of salvation, long forbearance, &c. And yet they stood out still, they still hated to be reformed, "set at nought all his counsel, and would none of his reproof." Wherefore the day of gracious visitation being once expired, a thousand worlds will not purchase it again: heaven and earth cannot recal it. No mercy, no comfort, no blessing can then be had, though they seek it with tears and yelling. They shall never more be heard, though with much violence they throw their shrieks into the air, they cry with sighs and groans as piercing as a sword. Not but that the gates of heaven and arms of mercy may stand wide open until their last breath. But, alas! they have already so hardened their hearts that they cannot repent. "After thine hardness, saith Paul (Rom. ii, 5), and heart that cannot repent." They now but howl upon their beds, they do not cry unto God with their hearts, as the prophet speaks (Hos. vii, 14). Their earnest and early crying in this last

extremity is only because their "fear is come upon them as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind." When they cast out their considerations for comfort, it is not the whole creation can possibly help them; for they must stand or fall to the tribunal of the "everlasting God, mighty and terrible, and Creator of the ends of the earth." If they look up to God the Father, that scripture, Prov. i, 24, 26, comes presently into their head with much horror, and quite kills their hearts; because he hath called all our life long, and all that goodly time we refused, he will laugh now at our calamity, and mock when our fear is come. Jesus Christ, as they strongly conceive, and immoveably conclude against themselves, hath now to them for ever closed up his wounds as it were, and will not afford them one drop of his blood; because they have so often by coming unworthily spilt it in the sacrament, persecuted him in his members, and despised him in the ministry. The blessed Spirit, because in the day of visitation they repelled all his inward warnings and holy motions, preferring Satan's impure suggestions before his sacred inspirations, doth now in their own acknowledgment, by the equity of a just proportion, in this day of vexation leave them to eat the fruit of their former wilfulness, and reap the reward of their own ways. Thus these forlorn wretches are disclaimed, forsaken, and abandoned of heaven and earth, God and man; of all the comforts in this life and blessings of the world to come. And so by final despairing of God's mercy, the greatest of sins, they most unhappily and cursedly follow Judas, the worst of men, into the darkest and most horrible cavern in hell.

(2.) Others die senselessly and blockishly. They demean themselves upon their dying beds as though there were no immortality of the soul, no tribunal above, no strict account to be given up there for all things done in the flesh, no everlasting estate in the world to come, wherein every one must either lie in unspeakable pains, or live in unutterable pleasures. In their lifetime they were never wont to tremble at God's judgments, or rejoice in his promises, or much trouble themselves with the ministry of the word, or about the state of their souls. All was one to them, what minister they had, whether a man "taught to the kingdom of Christ," or a general teacher, or an ignorant mangler of the word, or a dissolute fellow, or a dauber with untempered mortar, or a dumb dog. If they were neither prostitutes nor thieves, but well accounted of amongst their neighbours, thrived in the world, prospered in their outward state, provided for posterity, slept in a whole skin, were

not vexed on the Lord's day with any of these precise trouble-towns; they were well enough, and had all they looked for, either in this world or the world to come. Wherefore at their death, by reason of their former disacquaintance with spiritual things, and God not opening their eyes, they are neither afflicted with any fear of hell, or affected with any hope of heaven; they are both unapprehensive of their present danger, and fearless of the fiery lake into which they are ready to fall. In these regards they are utterly untouched, die most quietly, and without any trouble at all. And it is their ordinary answer, when they are questioned about their spiritual state, and how it stands with them between God and their own consciences, "I thank God, nothing troubles me;" which though they think it makes much for their own credit, yet, alas! it is a small comfort to judicious by-standers, and such as wish well to their souls; but rather a fearful confirmation that they are finally given over to the spirit of slumber, and sealed up by divine justice in the sottishness and security of their own senseless hearts for most deserved condemnation. Thus these men, as one speaks, "live like stocks and die like blocks." "And yet the ignorant people," saith Greenham, "will still commend such fearful deaths, saying, He departed as meekly as a lamb; he went away as a bird in a shell, when they might as well say (but for their feather bed and their pillow) he died like a beast, and perished like an ox in a ditch."

(3.) Others die formally. I mean, they make very godly shows and representations of much confidence and comfort. Having formerly been formal professors, and so furnished with many forms of godly speeches, and outward Christian behaviours; and the spirit of delusion and spiritual self-cozenage, which in their life-time detained them in constancy of security and self-conceitedness about the spiritual safety of their souls, without any such doubts, troubles, fears, temptations, as are wont to haunt those who are true of heart (for ordinarily such is the peace of unsound professors), continuing their imaginary groundless persuasion and presumption in the height and strength unto the end, for their very last breath may be spent in saying "Lord, Lord, open unto us," as we see in the foolish virgins and those Mat. vii; I say such men as these, thus wofully deluded and fearfully deceiving others, may cast out upon their last beds many glorious speeches, intimating much seeming confidence of a good estate to God-ward, contempt of the world, willingness to die, readiness to forgive all the

world, hope to be saved, desire to be dissolved and go to heaven, &c. They may cry aloud with a great deal of formal confidence, "Lord, Lord; Mercy, mercy in the name of Christ; Lord Jesus receive our spirits," &c.; and yet all these goodly hopes, and earnest ejaculations, growing only from a form, and not from the power of godliness, are but, as I said somewhere before, as so many catchings and scramblings of a man over head in water. He struggles and strives for hold to save himself, but he grasps nothing but water, it is still water which he catches, and therefore sinks and drowns. They are all but as a spider's web, upon which, one falling from the top of a house lays hold by the way for stay and support. "He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure" (Job viii, 14, 15). "Oh, how many descend," saith an ancient father, "with this hope to eternal travails and torment?" "How many," saith another worthy doctor\*, "go to hell with a vain hope of heaven, whose chiefest cause of damnation is their false persuasion and groundless presumption of salvation!" Of all the four kinds of death which ordinarily befall such as are not saved, this is the fairest in show; but yet of greatest imposture to those about them, and of most pestilent consequence to harden especially all of the same humour that hear of it.

(4.) Some die penitently. But I mean seemingly so, not savingly. Many having served their appetites all their lives and lived in pleasure; now, when the sun of their sensual delights begins to set, and the dark midnight of misery and horror to seize upon them, would very gladly be saved. And I blame them not, if they might first live the life of the wicked, and then die the death of the righteous: if they might have the earthly heaven of the world's favourites here, and the heaven of Christ's martyrs in the world to come. These men are wont in this last extremity to grieve extremely; but it is but like their "howling upon their beds," Hos. vii, 14. Because they are pinched with some sense of present horror and expectation of dreadful things, they cry out mightily for mercy; but it is no other than their early seeking, Prov. i, 28. Because distress and anguish is come upon them, they inquire eagerly after God, and would now be gladly acquainted with him; but just like them, Psalm lxxviii, 34, "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did

\* Dr. Featly.

flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him." They promise very fair, and protest gloriously what mended men they will be if the Lord restore them. But all these goodly promises are but as a morning cloud, and as the early dew. They are like those of a thief or murderer at the bar, who being now cast, and seeing there is now no way but one, O what a reformed man would he be, if he might be reprieved! Antiochus, as the apocryphal book of the Maccabees reports (2 Maccab. ix), when the hand of God was upon him horribly, vowed excellent things. O what he would do: so and so extraordinarily for the people of God! yea, and that "he himself also would become a Jew; and go through all the world that was inhabited and declare the power of God." But what was it, think you, that made this raging tyrant to relent and thus seemingly repent? "A pain of the bowels that was remediless came upon him, and sore torments of the inner parts; so that no man could endure to carry him for his intolerable stench; and he himself could not abide his own smell." Many may thus behave themselves upon their beds of death with very strong shows and many boisterous representations of true turning unto God, whereas in truth and trial they are as yet rotten at heart-root; and as yet no more comfort upon good ground belongs unto them than to those in the fore-cited places; and if any spiritual physician in such a case do press it hand over head, or such a patient presume to apply it, it is utterly misgrounded, misapplied. Hear what one of the worthiest divines in Christendom saith\*: "Now put the case, one cometh to his ghostly father with such sorrow of mind as the terrors of a guilty conscience usually do produce, and with such a resolution to cast away his sins as a man hath in a storm to cast away his goods; not because he doth not love them, but because he feareth to lose his life if he part not with them: doth not he betray this man's soul, who putteth into his head that such an extorted repentance as this, which hath not one grain of love to season it withal, will qualify him sufficiently for the receiving of an absolution?" &c. And another, excellently instructed unto the kingdom of heaven †: "Repentance at death is seldom sound. For it may seem rather to arise from fear of judgment, and a horror of hell, than for any grief for sin. And many seeming to repent affectionately in dangerous sickness, when they have re-

\* Dr. Usher, in his Answer to a Jesuit's Challenge.

† Dyke, of Repentance, chap. xvi.

covered, have been rather worse than before. It is true, that *true* repentance is never too *late*, but *late* repentance is seldom *true*:" for here our sins rather leave us than we them, as Ambrose says, and as he adds, "Woe be unto them whose sin and life end together." This received principle among the ancient fathers, that late repentance is rarely true, implies that it is often false and unsound, and so by consequence confirms the present point. Too manifold experience also makes it good. Amongst many, for my part I have taken special notice of two. The one being laboured with in prison, was seemingly so extraordinarily humbled, that a reverend man of God was moved thereby to be a means of his reprieve, whereupon a pardon was procured. And yet this so extraordinary a penitent while death was in his eye, having the terror removed, returned to his vomit, and some two years after to the same place again, as notorious a Belial as he was before. Another, having upon his bed of sickness received in his own conceit the sentence of death against himself; and being pressed to humiliation and broken-heartedness, for he had formerly been a stranger and an enemy to purity and the power of godliness, answered thus: "My heart is broken;" and so broke out into an earnest confession of particular sins; he named uncleanness, stubbornness, obstinacy, vain-glory, hypocrisy, dissimulation, uncharitableness, covetousness, lukewarmness, &c. He compared himself to the thief upon the cross. "And if God," saith he, "restore me to health again, the world shall see what an altered man I will be." When he was pressed to sincerity and true heartedness in what he said; he protested that he repented with all his heart and soul, and mind, and bowels, &c.; and desired a minister that stood by to be a witness of these things between the world and him. And yet this man upon his recovery became the very same, if not worse than he was before.

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## CHAP. IX.

The Remedy in this Fifth Case. 1. Admonition to the Ministers, to be careful in comforting at that time. 2. To the People, not to defer Repentance till that time.

Now since upon this perusal of the different deaths incident to the godly and the wicked, it appears that some men never soundly converted, may in respect of all outward representations die as confidently and comfortably in the judg-

ment of the most as God's dearest children; and that Christ's best servants sometimes may depart this life uncomfortably to the eye and in the opinion of the greater part; and we heard before that our last and everlasting doom must pass upon us, according to the sincerity or sensuality, the zealous forwardness or formality of our former courses, and not according to the seeming of our last carriage upon the bed of death, and enforced behaviour in that time of extremity: I say, these things being so, I hold my conclusion still, and resolution not much to alter my estimation of a man's spiritual state for the manner of his death (I except the thieves upon the cross): my meaning is, that there may be some (I know not how few, but I am sure there is none, except he have in him the perfection of the madness of all the maniacs that ever breathed, would run that hazard), who formerly out of the way and unreformed, may now at last, being very extraordinarily and mightily humbled under God's mighty hand, and cleaving to the Lord Jesus with truly broken hearts indeed, follow by a miracle, as it were, the thief upon the cross to an everlasting crown. And here now I require the care, conscience, heavenly wisdom, experimental skill, and all his ministerial dexterity in the physician of the soul, to discern aright between these and seeming penitents; and then to apply himself proportionably with all holy discretion and seasonableness to their several different estates.

But to fright and turn every one for ever from that extreme folly of hoping to follow that miraculous penitent thief, and from going on in sin and deferring repentance upon such a deceiving and desperate ground; let us consider,—

(1.) What a holy and learned man of God (Greenham) saith to this point. "In great wisdom, that men at the last gasp should not utterly despair, the Lord hath left us but one example of exceeding and extraordinary mercy, by saving the thief on the cross. Yet the perverseness of all our nature may be seen by this, in that this one serveth us to looseness of life, in hope of the like; whereas we might better reason, that it is but one, and that extraordinary; and that besides this one, there is not one more in all the Bible; and that for this one that sped, a thousand thousands have missed: and what folly is it to put ourselves in a way where so many have miscarried! To put ourselves into the hand of that physician that hath murdered so many; going clean against our sense and reason: whereas in other we always lean to that which is most ordinary, and conclude not the spring to be come because of one swallow? It is as if a man should spur his ass till he spoke, because Balaam's

ass did once speak. So grossly hath the devil bewitched us."

(2.) The singularities about the good thief. First, his heart was broken with one short sermon as it were; but thou hast or mightest have heard many, and art yet hard-hearted. Secondly, the other thief saw also that sovereign soul-healing blood gush freshly and abundantly out of his blessed side, and yet was not struck or stirred at all. Thirdly, his example is only for true penitents; but thou, upon this presumption despising in the mean time the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, leading thee to repentance, hardenest thy heart that thou canst not repent. Fourthly, his case was singular, and such that the like is not to be found in the whole scripture. A king sometimes pardons a malefactor at the place of execution; wilt thou therefore run desperately into some horrible villany deserving death, hoping to be that one among many thousands? Fifthly, "It was a miracle," saith an excellent divine \*, "with the glory whereof our Saviour would honour the ignominy of the cross. We may almost as well expect a second crucifying of Christ, as such a second thief. Christ then triumphing on the cross, did as princes do in the triumph of entering into their kingdoms, they pardon gross offences before committed, such as they pardon not afterwards." Sixthly, having an eye upon this thief, that thou mayest more fully and freely follow thy pleasures, thou makest "a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell, and puttest the evil day far from thee;" but the Lord hath professed, "that thy covenant with death shall be disannulled, and thy agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then shalt thou be trodden down by it.

(3.) The ordinary impossibilities of following the blessed thief in his miraculous repentance. First, thou art cried unto continually by God's messengers to come in now, while it is called to-day; yet thou standest out still, out of this thought only, or rather want of thought, to take thy fill of pleasure in the mean time, and to seek God sufficiently upon thy bed of death, by repenting with the thief at last. But know, for thy terror and timely turning, that the longer thou puttest off and deferrest, the more unfit thou shalt be to repent. Thy custom in sinning will exercise more tyranny over thee: the curse of God for thy going on still in thy trespasses will be more heavy upon thee: the corruptions that lurk in thine own bosom will be more strengthened

\* Dyke on Repentance, chap. xvii.

against thee; and this threefold cord is hardly broken; these three giants will be mastered with very much ado. The farther thou walkest in the ways of death, the more unwilling and more unable wilt thou be to return and be reformed. Thine understanding will be more darkened with hellish mists; thy judgment more perverted; thy will more stubborn; thy memory more stuffed with sensual notions; thine affections will become more rebellious; thy thoughts more earthly; thine heart more hardened; thy conscience more seared; thyself more sold to sin; and every day that comes over thine head in this state of darkness, much more the child of the devil than thou wast before. To refuse Christ upon this point so freely and fairly offered, is to receive God's curse under seal, and to make sure thy covenant with hell and league with death, until thou be slain by the one and swallowed up of the other, without all mercy or recovery. For in this time of delay God grows more angry, Satan more strong, thyself more unable to repent, sin more unconquerable, thy conversion more hard, thy salvation more impossible. A ruinous house, the longer thou lettest it run, the more labour and charge will it require in repairing. If thou drive a nail with a hammer, the more blows thou givest to it, the more hard will it be to draw it out again. It is just so in the case of continuing in sin; and every new sin is a new stroke with a hammer that drives the nail in farther. Secondly, with what possibility art thou likely to pass through the great work of saving repentance? or with what heart canst thou address thyself unto it? when upon thy sick bed thou art set upon at once, if thy conscience be waking, with the ugly sight of all thy sins charging upon thee with insupportable horror, with the pangs of death, with Satan's utmost malice and his very powder-plot, and with the terror of that approaching strict tribunal; which dreadful encounter is able to put to it the spiritual strength of many years gathering. Thirdly, resolution to defer repentance, when grace is offered, doth justly merit to be deprived for ever after of all opportunity and ability to repent. Fourthly; it is just with God, that that man who doth purposely put off repentance and provision for his soul until his last sickness, should for that sin alone be snatched out of the world in great anger, even suddenly, so that there be scarce a moment betwixt the height of his temporal happiness and the depth of his spiritual misery. That his foolish hope may be frustrated and his vain purpose come to nothing; he may be cut off as the top of an ear of corn, and put out like a candle, when he least thinks of death, and dreams of nothing less than departure from his earthly

paradise. "They are exalted for a little while," saith Job, "but are gone and brought low : they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn" (Job xxiv, 24). Fifthly, a long continued custom is not wont to be shaken off in an instant. Is it likely that a black-moor should change his skin and a leopard his spots in three or four days, which they have contracted in forty or three-score years? Therefore I marvel that any should be so blindfolded and baffled by the devil as to embolden himself to drive off until the last, by that passage of scripture — "At what time soever a sinner doth repent him of his sin from the bottom of his heart, I will put all his wickedness out of my remembrance, saith the Lord ;" especially if he look upon the text from whence it is taken, which methinks being rightly understood, and the conditions well considered, is most punctual and precise to fright any from that desperate folly. The words run thus: "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions," &c. (Ezek. xviii, 21, 22). Hence it appears, that if any man expect upon good ground any portion in this precious promise of mercy and grace, he must "leave all his sins, and keep all God's statutes." Now, how performest thou the condition of leaving all thy sins, when, as in this last extremity, having received the sentence of death against thyself, thy sins leave thee, and not thou thy sins, that I may speak in the phrase of an ancient father? And what space is left to come to comfort by keeping all God's statutes, when thou art presently to pass to that highest and dreadful tribunal, to give an exact and strict account for the continual breach of all God's laws all thy life long? Sixthly, many seem to be very penitent and promise exceeding fair in the evil day and upon their sick beds, who being recovered and restored to their former state are the very same they were before, if not worse. I never knew, nor heard of any unwrought upon under conscionable means, who after recovery performed the vows and promises of a new life, which he made in his sickness and times of extremity. For if he will not be moved with the ministry, God will never give that honour unto the cross to do the deed. "Nay, Father Abraham," saith the rich glutton, "but if one went unto them from the dead they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Luke xvi, 30, 31). It would amaze thee much if one of thy good-fellow companions should now

rise from the dead and tell thee, that he who was thy brother in iniquity is now in hell, and if thou follow the same sensual courses still, thou must shortly most certainly follow him to the place of torment. And yet even this would not work at all if thou be a despiser of the word. It may be while the dead man stood by thee thou wouldest be extraordinarily moved and promise much; but no sooner should he be in his grave, but thou wouldest be as graceless as thou wast before. Seventhly, what wise man, seeing a fellow who never gave his name to religion in his life-time, now only troubled about sin, when he is sure he must die, will not suspect it to be wholly slavish and extorted for fear of hell? "My sentence is," saith Greenham, "that a man lying now at the point of death, having the snares of death upon him, in that strait of fear and pain, may have a sorrow for his life past; but because the weakness of flesh, and the bitterness of death doth most commonly procure 'it, we ought to suspect," &c. Eighthly, painful distempers of body are wont to weaken much and hinder the activeness and freedom of the soul's operations; nay, sometimes to distract and utterly overthrow them. Many, even of much knowledge, grace, and good life, by reason of the damp and deadness which at that time the extremity and anguish of their disease brings upon their spirits, are able to do no great matter, if any thing at all, either in meditation or expression. How then dost thou think to pass through the incomparably greatest work that ever the soul of man was acquainted with in this life (I mean the *new-birth*) at the point of death? It is a woful thing to have much work to do, when the power of working is almost done. When we are come to the very last cast, our strength is gone, our spirits clean spent, our senses appalled, and the power of our souls as numb as our senses; when there is a general prostration of all our powers, and the shadow of death upon our eyes, then something we would say or do, which should do our souls good. But, alas! how should it then be?

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## CHAP. X.

The Third Error of applying comfort, which is indiscreet application.

The first case wherein it happens, which is too sudden application; and the demonstration of that error.

WHEN the spiritual physcian pours the balm of mercy and oil of comfort into a wounded conscience —

1. Too soon. The surgeon that heals up a dangerous sore,

and draws a skin over it before his corrosive have consumed the dead flesh, before he hath opened it with his tents, ransacked it to the root, and rent out the core, is so far from serving, that he procures a great deal of misery to his patient. For the rotten matter that remains behind will continue to rankle and fester underneath, and at length break out again perhaps, both with more extremity of anguish and difficulty of cure. They are but mountebanks, smatterers in physic and surgery, in short, but plain cheaters and cozeners, who are so ready and resolute for extemporary and palliative cures. Sudden recoveries from rooted and old distempers are rarely sound. If it be thus in bodily cures, what a deal do you think of extraordinary discretion, heavenly wisdom, precise and punctual pondering of circumstances, well-advised and seasonable leisure, both speculative and experimental skill, heartiest ejaculations, wrestlings with God by prayer for a blessing, is very convenient and needful for a true and right method in healing a wounded conscience! which doth pass immeasurably all other maladies, both in exquisiteness of pain, tenderness of touch, deceitfulness of depth, and in highest and greatest consequence, either for the everlasting health or endless horror of an immortal soul. Hence it was that that one of a thousand and learned doctor in this heavenly mystery\*, did so far differ from all daubers with untempered mortar and the ordinary undoing courses in this kind:—

“But now coming to the salving of this sore,” saith he, “I shall seem very strange in my cure, and so much the more be wondered at, by how much in manner of proceeding I differ from the most sort of men herein. I am not ignorant that many visiting afflicted consciences cry still, Oh, comfort them! Oh, speak joyful things unto them! Yea, there be some, and those of the most learned, who in such cases are full of these and such like speeches: Why are you so heavy, my brother? Why are you so cast down, my sister? Be of good cheer. Take it not so grievously. What is there that you should fear? God is merciful; Christ is a Saviour. These be speeches of love indeed; but they often do the poor souls as much good herein, as if they should pour cold water into their bosoms; whenas without further searching of their sores they may as well minister a malady as a medicine. For as nutritive and cordial medicines are not good for every sick person, especially when the body needeth rather a strong purgative than a matter restorative; and as carminative medicines may for

\* Greenham, in his Treatise for an Afflicted Conscience.

a time allay the pain of the patient, but after the grief becometh more grievous : so the comfortable applying of God's promises are not so profitable for every one that is humbled, especially when their souls are rather further to be cast down than as yet to be raised up ; so those sugared consolations may for a while overheal the conscience and abate some present grief ; but so as afterwards the smart may be the sorer, and the grief may grow the greater. Hereof ensueth this effect, that comfort seemeth to cure for a while, but for want of wisdom in the right discerning of the cause, men minister one medicine for another ; and so for want of skill the latter grindeth sorer than the former."

Calvin, also, that great pillar and glory of the Christian world, for sincere and sound orthodox doctrine\*, concurs in judgment with this blessed man of God ; and so, I doubt not, do all the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ. "Let this be the first degree of repentance, when men feel that they have been grievous offenders ; and then the grief is not to be immediately cured, as impostors deal flatteringly and nicely with men's consciences, that they may favour themselves as much as may be, and be notably deceived with superficial daubing. The physician will not forthwith assuage the pain, but will consider what may be more expedient. Perhaps he will increase it, because a sharper medicine will be necessary. Even so the prophets of God, when they see trembling consciences, do not presently apply sweet consolations ; but rather tell them, that they must not dally with God, and stir up those who are so forward of their own accord, that they would propose unto themselves the terrible judgment of God, that they may yet be more and more humbled."

Another excellent and skilful workman in the great mystery of saving souls †, tells us truly, "That the promise of salvation doth not immediately belong to one terrified in conscience, but to one that is not only terrified for his punishment, but is contrite-hearted for sin, which is the work of the gospel. Let not these be weary of the yoke of God and the law, and make overmuch haste out of this state, for so they may undo themselves. For some withstanding their terror, have withstood their salvation, &c. Even as an impatient patient gets the surgeon to pull out the tent and corrosive, or pulls it off himself as soon as it begins to smart a little, and so thinks it is searched enough, and now lays on healing plaisters : but afterwards breaks off again worse than ever. Whereas if the corrosive had been let lie on till

\* On Joel, chap. ii.

† Mr. Rogers of Dedham, Doctrine of Faith.

it had eaten out the corruption indeed, then it might have been whole long ago."

If daubers in this kind did rightly understand and acknowledge, or had ever had any experimental feeling in their own souls of Christ's rule, and the Holy Ghost's method, which is first to convince of sin, to deject and humble in the sight of the Lord with apprehension and sense of a most abominable and cursed state, before there follow a conviction of the righteousness of Christ to raise up (see John xvi, 8), or of the necessity of the work of the spirit of bondage, to fit and prepare for Christ and comfort; I say, then, they would not deal so ignorantly in a matter of so dear and everlasting importance. They would not so hastily and rashly, without all warrant and wisdom, without any further search, discovery, or dejection, offer mercy, pardon, and all the promises to a man formerly wicked, only for some faint and enforced confession of sins, or because now being overtaken by the evil day, he howls upon his bed, not for any true hatred of sin, but for present smart and expected horror, &c. But would labour to let the spirit of bondage have its full work, and lay him open more at large in the true colour of his scarlet sins; and not only cause a bare confession of them, but such a conviction as may stop his mouth, so that he hath not a word to speak, but trembles to see such a sink, Sodom, and hell of sin and abomination in himself, &c. Oh, how oft have I heard many a poor ignorant soul in the day of sorrow, being moved to humble himself in the sight of the Lord that he might lift him up, first to get his heart broken with the abhorred burthen of all his sins, and then to bring it thus bleeding to the throne of grace, that Christ might bind it up; I say, being thus intreated, to answer, Yes, yes, with all my heart; I am sorry for my sins with all my heart; I trust in Jesus Christ with all my heart; and thus, whatsoever you can counsel or advise, he doth it with all his heart; whereas, alas! poor heart, as yet his understanding is as dark as darkness itself, in respect of any, I say not only saving knowledge, but almost of any knowledge at all; and his heart in respect of any true remorse as hard as a rock of flint. Now those unskilful physicians of the soul, who in this and the like cases will needs without any more ado, without any further enlightening or labour, thrust mercy and comfort upon them, are like those "foolish shepherds," as Marbury, in his Exposition upon Psalm xxxii, calls them, "who when they want skill to help their poor sheep out of the ditch, are driven to play the miserable comforters, and to take some other indirect course (as many use to do in such

cases), to cut the sheep's throat in time to make him man's meat, lest it should be said, he died in a ditch." They are *desolators* not *consolators*, as Austin sometimes calls them; not sound comforters, but true cut-throats.

Besides that which I have said before of the precedency of the working of the law and of the spirit of bondage to make way for Christ, let me further tell you upon this occasion (that it may appear that much more is to be done herein than is ordinarily imagined before comfort may upon good ground and seasonably be applied to the conscience awaked) what an excellent divine, both for depth of learning and height of holiness, delivered somewhere in this point to this purpose.

"No man must think this strange, that God dealeth with men after this strange manner; as it were to kill them before he make them alive; to let them pass through, or by, as it were, the gates of hell to heaven; to suffer the spirit of bondage to put them into a fear, into a shaking and trembling, &c. For he suffers those that are his to be terrified with this fear, —

"First. In respect of his own glory, for the magnifying both of his justice and of his mercy.

"(1.) He glorifies his justice when lessening, or altogether, for the time, abstracting all sight of mercy. He lets the law, sin, conscience, and Satan loose upon a man to have their course and several comminations, and sets the spirit of bondage on work, &c. Thus as in the great work of redemption\*, he would have the glory of his justice appear; so would he have it also in the application of our redemption, that justice should not be swallowed up of

\* As in the work of creation, so in the work of redemption, God would have the praise of all his attributes. He is much honoured when they are acknowledged to be in him in highest perfection, and their infiniteness and excellency admired and magnified. In the former there appeareth gloriously his infinite wisdom, goodness, power, justice, mercy, &c.; and yet in the work of redemption, which was the greater, they seem to shine with more sweetness, amiableness, and excellency; for in it appeared all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, &c. And in conveying it to the church — First, His wisdom there appeareth infinite wisdom, in finding out such a means for the redemption of mankind as no created understanding could possibly imagine or think of. Secondly, His mercy immeasurably sweet and admirable, in not sparing his own Son, the Son of his love, that he might spare us, who had so grievously transgressed against him. Thirdly, His justice in its highest excellency, in sparing us, not to spare his own only Son; laying, as it were, his head upon the block, and chopping it off; rending and tearing that blessed body, even as the veil of the temple was rent, and making his soul an offering for sin, &c. This was the perfection of justice.

mercy ; but even as the woman, 2 Kings iv, who had nothing to pay was threatened by creditors to take away her two sons, and put them in prison, so we having nothing to pay, the law is let loose upon us, to threaten imprisonment and damnation ; to affright and terrify, and all this for the manifesting of his justice. Furthermore, the book of God is full of terrible threatenings against sinners. Now, shall all those be to no purpose ? The wicked are insensible of them, to them therefore in that respect they are in vain. Some there must needs be upon whom they must work. ‘ Shall the lion roar,’ saith the prophet, ‘ and no man be afraid ? ’ Since, then, they who should, will not ; some there be who must tremble. This the prophet excellently setteth forth, Isa. lxvi, 2, where the Lord showeth whom he will regard. ‘ But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.’ Neither is it without good cause that God dealeth thus with his own in this manner, though it be sharp in the experience. First, we must fear, tremble, and be humbled ; and then we shall receive a spirit not to fear again.

“(2.) His mercy is also thereby mightily magnified ; which would never be so sweet, nor relish so well, nor be so esteemed of us, if the awful terror of justice had not formerly made us smart. A king sometimes doth not only suffer the law to pass upon some grievous malefactor for high treason, but also causeth him to be brought to the place of execution, yea, and lay down his head upon the block ere he pardon ; and then mercy is mercy indeed, and melts the heart\* abundantly with amazement and admiration of it. So God dealeth with us many times ; lets the law loose against us, puts us in fear, casts us into prison, and threateneth condemnation in hell for ever ; so that when mercy cometh to the soul, being now lost in itself and at the pit’s brink, it appears to be a wonderful mercy, the riches of exceeding mercy, most seasonable, most sweet, most

\* A man who otherwise would not cry nor shed a tear for any thing, despiseth death, and would not fear to meet a host of men ; I say, such a one now having at the last instant a pardon brought from the king, it worketh wonderfully upon him, and will cause softness of heart and tears to come many times where nothing else could. He is so struck with admiration of so great mercy, so sweet and seasonable in such an extremity, that he stands amazed and knows not what to say ; but many times falls to weeping, partly for joy of his deliverance, and partly also out of indignation against himself, for his barbarous behaviour towards so merciful a prince. This was to be seen in some great men, at the beginning of King James’s reign, condemned for treason, and pardoned at the block.

ravishing. Why do so many find no savour in the gospel? Is it because there is no matter of sweetness or delight in it? No; it is because they have not tasted of, not been soundly touched and terrified by the law and the spirit of bondage. They have not smarted, nor as yet been afflicted with a sense of the bitterness of sin, nor of the just punishment due unto the same. God therefore sends into our hearts the spirit of fear and bondage to prepare us to relish mercy; and then the spirit of adoption not to fear again. And thus by this order the one is magnified and highly esteemed by the foregoing sense of the other.

“ Secondly, for our good; and that two ways: 1. In justification; and 2. In sanctification.

“(1.) We are such strangers unto God that we will never come unto him till we see no other remedy; being at the pit’s brink, ready to starve, hopeless, &c. We see it in the prodigal son. He would never think of any return unto his father till all other helps failed him; money, friends, acquaintance, all sorts of food; nay, if he might have fed upon husks with the swine he would not have thought of returning any more to his father. This being denied him, the text saith, ‘ he came to himself:’ showing us, that when men run on in sinful courses they are madmen, out of themselves, even as we see those in Bedlam are beaten, kept under, denied comforts till they come to themselves. And what saith he then? ‘ I will arise and go to my father; and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against thee,’ &c. So it is with us: until the Lord humble and bring us low in our own eyes, show us our own misery and spiritual poverty, and that in us there is no good thing; that we be stripped of all helps in and without ourselves, and see that we must perish unless we beg his mercy: I say, until then we will not seek his face and favour, nor have recourse to Jesus Christ, the rock of our salvation. It is with us in this case as it was with the woman whom Christ healed of the bloody issue (Luke viii, 43). How long was it ere she came to Christ? She had been sick twelve years; she had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could she be healed of any. Now this extremity brought her to Jesus Christ. This then is the means to bring to Christ, to bring us upon our knees, to drive us out of ourselves hopeless, as low as may be; to show us where help is only to be found, and make us run unto it. The hunted beast flies unto his den; the Israelites being stung by fiery serpents made haste to the brazen serpent, a type of Christ, for help; the man-killer under the law, chased by the avenger of blood, ran apace to the city

of refuge ; Joab, being pursued for his life, fled to the tabernacle of the Lord, and laid fast hold upon the horns of the altar ; a wounded man hies unto the surgeon : proportionably a poor soul, broken and bruised with the insupportable burthens of all his abominations, bleeding at heart's root under sense of Divine wrath by the cutting edge of the sword of the Spirit, managed aright by some masters of assemblies, chased furiously by the law, sin, conscience, and Satan ; sometimes even to the brink of despair, will be willing in good earnest to cast itself into the sweet, compassionate, inviting arms and embracements of Jesus Christ, broken and bleeding upon the cross for our sins, and so be made his for ever.

“(2.) For our sanctification, also, it is good for us that the Comforter's first work be to work fear in us ; for we are naturally so frozen in our dregs, that no fire will warm or thaw us. We wallow in our own blood ; we stick fast in the mire of sin up to the chin, that we cannot stir ; so that this fear is sent to pull us violently as it were from our corruptions, to make us holy, and look unto our ways for the time to come. Now to effect this, sharpest things are best, as are the law and threatenings of condemnation, the opening of hell, the racking of the conscience, and a sense of wrath present and to come. So hard-hearted are we by nature, being as the children of the bondwoman, to whom violence must be used, even as we see a man riding a young and wild horse to tame him. He will run him against a wall that he may make him afraid ; ride him in deep and rough places ; or, if this will not do, take him up to some high rock, and bringing him to the brink thereof, he threateneth to throw him down headlong ; maketh him shake and quake, whereby at the last he is tamed. So deals the Lord with us : he gives us a sight of sin and of the punishment due thereunto, a sense of wrath, setteth the conscience on fire, as it were ; filleth the heart with fears, horrors, and disquietness ; openeth hell thus unto the soul, bringeth us to the gates thereof, and threateneth us to throw us in ; and all this to make a man more holy, and hate sin the more.”

“The cure of the stone in the heart,” saith another\*, speaking to the same purpose, “is like that of the stone in the bladder. God must use a sharp incision, and come with his pulling and plucking instruments, and rend the heart in pieces, ere that sin can be got out of it.” “Even as in a lethargy it is needful the patient should be cast into a burning fever, because the senses are benumbed, and this

\* Dyke of Repentance, chap. ii.

will wake them, and dry up the besotting humours; so in our dead security before our conversion, God is pleased to let the law, sin, conscience, and Satan loose upon us, and to kindle the fire of hell in our souls, that so we might be roused. Our sins stick close unto us as the prisoners' bolts, and we are shut up under them as in a strong prison; and therefore, unless as once in Paul and Silas's case an earthquake, so here there come a mighty heart-quake, violently breaking open the prison doors and shaking off our fetters, never shall we get our liberty," &c.

Thus we see what a mighty work of the law and of the spirit of bondage there must be to prepare for Christ, and how requisite it is both for the glorifying of God's justice and mercy, and also for the furtherance of our justification and sanctification. For illustration of which point, besides all that hath been said before, I have more willingly in this last passage pressed at large the authority of so great a divine (in which I hope I have not swerved from his sense), because he is without exception, both for holiness and learning; and so his sincere and orthodox judgment more current and passable.

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## CHAP. XI.

Objection against the former Doctrine. Differences between legal Terrors in the Elect and others.

*Object.* But hence, it may be, some troubled soul may take up a complaint and say: Alas! if it be thus, what shall I think of myself? I do not remember that ever I tasted so deeply of such terrors and legal troubles as you seem to require. I have not been so humbled and terrified, nor had such experience of that state under the "spirit of bondage" as you talk of, &c.; and therefore you have cast scruples into my conscience about the truth and soundness of my conversion.

*Answer.* I answer: in this work of the "spirit of bondage;" in this case of legal terrors, humiliations, and other preparative dispositions, we do not prescribe precisely just such a measure and quantity: we do not determine peremptorily upon such or such a degree or height; we leave that to the wisdom of our great Master in heaven, the "only wise God," who is a most free agent; but sure we are a man must have so much, and in that measure, as to bring him to Christ. It must make him weary of all his sins, and of Satan's bondage wholly; willing "to pluck out his right

eye, and cut off his right hand," I mean, to part with his best beloved bosom lusts, to sell all, and not to leave so much as a hoof behind. It must be so much as to make him see his danger, and so haste to the city of refuge; to be sensible of his spiritual misery, that he may heartily thirst for mercy; to find himself lost and cast away in himself, that Christ may be all in all unto him; and after must follow a hatred of all false and evil ways for the time to come; a thorough change of former courses, company, conversation; and setting himself in the way and practice of sobriety, honesty, and holiness. If thou hast had experience of these affections and effects in thine own soul, whatsoever the measure of the work of the "spirit of bondage" hath been in thee, less or more, thou art safe enough, and mayest go on comfortably in the holy path, without any discouragement either from such pretended scruples in thyself, or any of Satan's cruel cavils and oppositions to the contrary.

Upon this occasion it will not be here unseasonable to tell you how that legal terror, which God appoints to be a preparative in his elect for the spirit of adoption, and a true change, differs from that which is found in aliens, and not attended with any such saving consequents; that every one who hath had trouble of conscience for sin, may clearly discern whether it hath brought him to Christ, or left him unconverted.

1. That happy soul, which is under the terrifying hand of God preparing by the work of the spirit of bondage for the entertainment of Christ and a sound conversion, upon that fearful apprehension of God's wrath and strict visitation of his conscience for sin, casts about for ease and reconciliation only by the blood of the Lord Jesus, and those soul-healing promises in the book of life, with a resolute contempt of all other means and offers for pacification; feeling now, and finding by experience, that no other way, no earthly thing, not this whole world, were it all dissolved into the most curious and exquisite pleasures that ever any carnal heart conceived, can any way assuage the least pang of his grieved spirit. Glad therefore is he to take counsel and to advise with any that is able or likely to lead him by a wise and discreet hand to a well-grounded comfort and refreshment; and resolveth greedily, whatever the prescription and direction be, to give way unto it most willingly in his performance and practice. "And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?" Thus were John's

hearers affected (Luke iii, 10, 12, 14), being afflicted with the piercing passages of John's thundering sermon. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" say the penitent Jews, pricked in their hearts (Acts ii, 37). The jailor (Acts xvi, 29, 30) "came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" As if they had said, Prescribe and enjoin what you will, be it never so harsh and distasteful to flesh and blood, never so cross and contrary to carnal reason, profit, pleasure, preferment, acceptance with the world, ease, liberty, life, &c. having warrant out of the word, we are resolved and ready to do it. Only inform us first how to partake and be assured of the person and passion of Christ Jesus; how to have the angry face of our blessed God, to whom we have continued rebels so long, turned into calmness and favour unto us. But now a cast-away and alien thus legally terrified and under wrath for sin, is never wont to come to this earnestness of care, eagerness of resolution, steadfastness of endeavour, willingness upon any terms, to abandon utterly all his old ways, and to embrace new, strict, and holy courses. These things appear unto him terrible, puritanical, and intolerable. He commonly in such cases hath recourse for ease and remedy to worldly comforts and the arm of flesh. He labours to relieve his heavy heart by a strong and serious casting his mind and nestling his conceit upon his riches, gold, greatness, great friends, credit amongst men, and such other transitory delights and fading flowers of his fool's paradise. For he is at a point, and resolute with a sensual impenitent obstinacy, not to pass forward through the pangs of the new-birth by repentance and sanctification into the holy life of new obedience; lest he should (as out of a foolish and frantic baseness he is apt to fear) be engaged and enchained, as it were, to too much strictness, preciseness, holiness of life, communion with God's people, and opposition to good fellowship.

2. He that is savingly wounded with legal terror, is wont in cool blood, and being something come to himself, to entertain the very same thought (or rather mingled with a great deal more reverence, affectionateness, and love, as far as the life of an immortal soul doth surpass in dearness and excellency the cure of a frail and earthly body) of that man of God, who by a right managing the edge of his spiritual sword hath pierced his heart, scorched his conscience, and bruised his spirits; I say, the same in proportion, which a wise and thankful patient would have of that faithful surgeon who hath seasonably and thoroughly lanced some deep and dangerous sore, which otherwise would have been

his death. Upon the search and discovery he clearly sees and acknowledges, that had not that holy incision been made into his rotten and ulcerous heart, it had cost him the eternal life of his soul. But now the alien, put out of his sensual humour with horror of conscience, is ordinarily transported with much rageful discontentment against the powerful ministry of God's earnest messengers, who put him to such torture by troubling him for sin and frighting him with hell; and thereupon cries out against them, at least with secret indignation and fretting, as the devils did against Christ, "Why do you thus torment us before the time?"

3. Aliens in such cases entertain no other thought, and cast about for no other comfort at all, but only how they may recover their former quietness of mind, carnal ease, and freedom from present terror. But he that is fitting by the spirit of bondage for faith and the fellowship of the saints, will never by any means, whatsoever come of him, relapse to his wonted sensual security. Nay, of the two, he will rather lie still upon the rack, waiting for the Lord Jesus all the days of his life, than "return any more unto foolishness," or hunt again after any contentment in the miserable pleasures of good-fellowship.

4. That messenger, an interpreter, one among a thousand, who in such a case can seasonably and soundly declare unto a savingly wounded soul his righteousness; assure him it was Christ Jesus' only business in coming from heaven to disburthen "all that labour and are heavy laden," and ease such trembling hearts, &c.; I say such a blessed man of God to such a broken heart is for ever after most dear and welcome; "his feet are beautiful" in his eye every time he comes near him. Comfort of so high a nature in extremity of such horrible consequence doth infinitely and endlessly endear the delivered soul to such an heavenly doctor. But aliens commonly make no great account of godly ministers any longer than they have present need of them, and trouble of mind makes them melancholic and out with mirth. They seem to reverence them, while from their general discourses of mercy and God's free grace, of merciful invitations to Christ and certainty of acceptance (if they will come in), they suck into their false hearts before the time and truth of humiliation some superficial glimmerings and flashes of comfort and cooling; but if once the heat of their guilty rage begin to assuage, and they find again some ease from their former terrors and wonted relish in earthly delights, they turn such holy men

out of their hearts, cast them out of their consciences, and hold no higher or further estimation of them, than of other and ordinary men, if they forbear to persecute them with thoughts of disdain and contempt.

5. The true penitent having smarted under the sense of Divine wrath, and frightened with the flames of horror for sin, doth grow fearful for ever after to offend, and with much gracious care dreads that "consuming fire." But the alien, while he is upon the rack indeed, and hath the heinousness of his sins and hell freshly in his eye, will easily make many glorious protestations and promises what a rare and resolute convert he will become upon his recovery. But if once the storm be overblown, God's hand withdrawn, and his painful conscience cast again into a dead sleep by the power, or rather poison of some sensual receipt, he performs just nothing; but like a filthy swine wallows again in the mire and mud of earthliness and carnality, and again with the beastly dog returns unto and resumes his vomit.

6. He that hath savingly passed through the pangs of such spiritual afflictions, is wont to be very kindly affected, most compassionate and tender-hearted to others afflicted with the same woful terrors and troubles of conscience. A woman, who hath herself with extraordinary pain experienced the exquisite torture of childbirth, is wont to be more tenderly and mercifully disposed towards another in the like torment, than she that never knew what that misery meant; and is more ready, willing, and skilful to relieve in such distresses. It is proportionably so in the present case; but the alien being tainted in some measure with the devil's hateful disposition, is by the heat of his slavish horror rather enraged with malice than resolved into mercy; he is rather tickled with a secret content, than touched with true commiseration, to see and hear of others plunged into the same gulf of misery and plagued like himself. He is much troubled with soleness in suffering, and the singularity of any sorrowful accident. Companionship in crosses doth something allay the discomforts of carnal men; so that sometimes they secretly but very sinfully rejoice (such is their dogged devilish disposition) even to see the hand of God upon their neighbours. Neither can he in such extremities minister any means of help or true comfort at all, either by prayer, counsel, or any experimental skill, because the "evil spirit" of his vexed conscience was not driven away by any well-grounded application of God's mercies and Christ's blood; but as Saul's was by music, worldly

mirth, carnal advice, soul-slaying flatteries of men-pleasing ministers, plunging desperately into variety of sensual pleasures, &c.

7. He who after the boisterous tempest of legal terrors, hath happily arrived at the port of peace, I mean that blessed peace "which passeth all understanding," made with God himself in the blood of his Son, enters presently thereupon into the good way, takes upon him the yoke of Christ, and serves him afterwards "in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life," and ordinarily his deeper humiliation is an occasion of his more humble, precise, holy, and strict walking, and of more watchfulness over his heart and tenderness of conscience about lesser sins also, all occasions of scandal, appearances of evil, even aberrations in his best actions and holiest duties. But aliens, when once they be taken off the rack, and their torture determine, either become just the same men they were before, or else reform only some one or other gross sin which stuck most upon their consciences, but remain unamended and unmortified in the rest; or else, which often comes to pass, grow a great deal worse: for they are, as it were, angry with God that he should give them a taste of hell-fire before their time; and therefore knowing their time but short, fall upon earthly delights more furiously, and engross and grasp the pleasures of the world with more greediness and importunity.

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## CHAP. XII.

Instructions for the avoiding this fault of applying comfort too soon.

THESE things thus premised, I come to tell you, that for the rectifying of the forementioned error, and prevention of the danger of daubing and undoing for ever in a matter of so weighty importance, I would advise the spiritual physician to labour with the utmost improvement of all his divine skill, heavenly wisdom, best experience, heartiest prayers, most piercing persuasions pressed out of the word for that purpose, wisely to work and watchfully to observe the season when he may warrantably and upon good ground apply unto the wounded soul of his spiritually sick patient assured comfort in the promises of life, and that sovereign blood which was spilt for broken hearts, and assure him in the word of truth, that all those rich compassions which lie within the compass of that great covenant of everlasting mercy and love, sealed with the painful sufferings of the Son of

God, belong unto him. Which is then when his troubled heart is soundly humbled under God's mighty hand, and brought at length to, first, a truly penitent sight, sense, and hatred of all sin; secondly, a sincere and insatiable thirst after Jesus Christ and righteousness both imputed and inherent; thirdly, an unfeigned and unreserved resolution of an universal new obedience for the time to come, Here I had purposed to have enlarged; but I am prevented by that which hath been said already; and therefore to avoid repetition, I must remit you to the consideration of those legal and evangelical preparations for the entertainment of Christ and true comfort which I handled before, which may give some good direction and satisfaction in the point. See p. 92 to 103.

Yet take notice, that in the mean time, before such fitness be fully effectuated, I would have the man of God ply his patient with his best persuasions and proofs, seasonably mingled with motives to humiliation, of the pardonableness of his sins, possibility of pardon, damnableness of despair, danger of ease by outward mirth, &c.; and to hold out to the eye of the troubled conscience as a prize and lure, as it were, the freeness of God's immeasurable mercy, the general offer of Jesus Christ without any exception of persons, times, or sins; the preciousness and infallibility of the promises, in as fair and lovely a fashion, in as orient and alluring forms as he can possibly. But it is one thing to say, If these things be so, I can assure you in the word of life of the promises of life, and already real right and interest to all the riches of God's free grace and glorious purchase of Christ's meritorious blood; another thing to say, if you will suffer your understandings to be enlightened, your consciences to be convinced, your hearts to be wounded with sight, sense, and horror of sin; if you will come in and take Jesus Christ, his person, his passion, his yoke; if you will entertain these, and these affections, longings, and resolutions, then most certainly our merciful Lord will crown your truly humbled souls with his dearest compassions and freest love.

Lastly, be informed that when all is done, I mean when the men of God have their desire, that the patient in their persuasion is soundly wrought upon, and professeth understandingly and feelingly, and as they verily think from his heart; first, that he is "heavy laden" with the grievous burthen of all his sins; secondly, that he is come by his present spiritual terror and trouble of mind to that resolution, "to do any thing," which we find in the hearers of John and Peter (Luke iii, Acts ii); thirdly, that he most

highly prizeth Jesus Christ far above the riches, pleasures and glory of the whole earth; thirsts and longs for him infinitely: fourthly, that he is most willing "to sell all," to part with all sin, with his right eye and right hand, those lusts and delights which stuck closest to his bosom, not to leave so much as a hoof behind; fifthly, that he is content with all his heart to take Christ, as well for a lord and husband, to serve, love, and obey him, as for a Saviour to deliver him from the miseries of sin; to take upon him his yoke; to enter into the narrow way and walk in the holy path; to associate himself to that sect which is "so spoken against everywhere" (Acts xxviii, 22); I say, when it is thus with the afflicted party, and most happy is he when it is thus with him; yet, notwithstanding, because God alone is the searcher of the heart, and the heart of man is deceitful above all things, we can assure mercy and pardon only conditionally, though by the mercy of God we do it many and many times with strong and undeceiving confidence. We must ever add, either expressly or impliedly, such forms of speech as these: If all this which you profess be in truth; if you be thus resolved indeed; if these things be so as you have said, why then we assure you in the word of life and truth, your case is comfortable; you may sweetly repose your troubled and truly humbled soul upon Jesus Christ as your "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" upon all the promises of life, God's free grace, &c. as truly belonging unto you and certainly yours for ever.

Hear two master builders upon the matter, confirming the present point:—

1. "To think that it lieth in the power of any priest truly to absolve a man from his sins, without implying the condition of his believing and repenting as he ought to do, is both presumption and madness in the highest degree\*."

2. "In the pardon whereby a priest pardoneth † a sinner

\* Dr. Usher, in his Answer to a Jesuit's Challenge; Of the Priest's power to forgive sins.

† By pardoning here understand not any sovereignty of remitting sins; we leave that error to the Luciferian pride of that "man of sin, who exalteth himself above all that is called God:" whom if we follow, we must say that in this high priest there is the fulness of all grace, because he alone giveth a full indulgence of all sins, that that may agree unto him which we say of the chief prince our Lord, that "of his fulness all we have received" (De Regimine Principum, lib. iii, cap. x, inter Opuscula Thomæ, num. 20). Nay, we must acknowledge, that the meanest in the whole army of priests that follows this king of pride, hath such fulness of power derived unto him for the opening and shutting of heaven before men, "that forgiveness is denied to them

for an offence by him committed against God, there are two things to be considered ; one, that there is no pardon if the sinner doth not earnestly repent ; the other, that he himself which pardoneth hath need of pardon. Of these two points, the first is the cause that the priest's pardon is conditional, because he knoweth not the heart ; the other is a cause that the priest should consider of himself that he is rather a delinquent than a judge ; and to teach him to fear, lest that after he hath pardoned others, he himself may not obtain pardon. It is a thing certain, that if a sinner seriously converted and believing in Jesus Christ cannot obtain absolution of his pastor, who is passionate or badly informed of the truth, God will pardon him. On the contrary, if a pastor that is indulgent and winketh at vices, or that is deceived by appearance of repentance, absolveth an hypocritical sinner and receiveth him into the communion of the faithful, that hypocritical sinner remaineth bound before God, and shall be punished notwithstanding. For God partaketh not with the errors of pastors, neither regardeth their passions ; nor can be hindered from doing justice by their ignorance\*."

3. Let me add Cyprian, who at the first rising of the Novatian heresy, wrote thus to Antonianus † ; " We do not prejudice the Lord that is to judge, but that he, if he find the repentance of the sinner to be full and just, may then ratify that which shall be here ordained by us. But if any one do deceive us with the semblance of repentance, God, who is not mocked, and who beholdeth the heart of man, may judge of those things which we did not well discern, and the Lord may amend the sentence of his servants."

Neither let this truth (to wit, that our assuring of mercy and pardon must be conditional upon such like terms as these, " If thou dost believe and repent as thou oughtest to do ; if these things be in truth as you promise and confess," &c.) discourage or trouble any that are true of heart :

whom the priest will not forgive" (Bellarm. de Pœnitent. lib. iii, cap. ii), I say then, by pardoning, we must not understand any sovereignty of remitting sins ; but a declaring and showing to the true repentant that they are pardoned, ministerially only. To which truth, it is so mighty, even some popish writers subscribe. " God," saith Lombard, the father of the Romish school, " hath given to priests to bind and unbind, that is, to show that men are bound or unbound." Nay, our polemical divines prove it to be publicly taught from the time of Satan's loosing until his binding again by the restoring of the purity of the gospel in our days.

\* Buckler of the Faith, by Peter de Moulin against Armour the Jesuit, of Auricular Confession.

† Ad Antonianum, epist. ii, lib. iv.

for it should not prejudice or hinder their application of the promises, taking Christ as their own, assurance of mercy and comfort; because they are conscious to themselves of the sincerity of their own hearts: and therefore look how the prophet Isaiah was comforted when the angel said unto him, "Thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged" (Isa. vi. 7), and the poor woman in the gospel, when Jesus said unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke vii, 48): the like consolation doth the distressed sinner receive from the mouth of the minister, when he hath compared the truth of God's word faithfully delivered by him with the work of God's grace in his own heart. According to that of Elihu, "If there be an angel, or a messenger with him, an interpreter, one of a thousand, to declare unto man his righteousness; then will God have mercy upon him, and say, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom" (Job xxxiii, 23, 24)\*.

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### CHAP. XIII.

The Second Case wherein the former Error is committed, which is in applying too much. Two things concerning which the afflicted is to be advised for avoiding this error.

2. Too much. A little *aqua vita* may happily revive and refresh the fainting spirits of a swooning man, but too much would kill. A spoonful of cinnamon water mingled with twelve spoonfuls of spring water and one spoonful of rose water, &c. may be sovereign against the sinking of the heart; but pour at once a pint into the stomach, and it might unhappily choke the natural heat, waste the radical moisture, and burn up a man's bowels. Mercy being wisely administered in the right season, and mingled with convenient counsels and cautions, may by God's blessing bind up a broken heart with a progressive and kindly cure, it may mollify for the present with an healing and heavenly heat the smarting anguish of a wounded conscience, and at length seasonably close it up with sound and lasting comfort; but poured out at random by an unsteady and indiscreet hand, it may by accident dangerously dry up penitent tears too soon, and stifle the work of the spirit of bondage in the beginning.

But here let none either out of ignorance or malice mistake or be troubled with this *too much*. The same phrase in

\* Usher, in his Answer to a Jesuit's Challenge.

the same sense is to be found in Mr. Perkins \*, a great master in the deep mystery of dealing with afflicted consciences. For we must know, that *too much* is by no means to be meant of any ways restraining or confining the infiniteness of God's mercy. It were execrable blasphemy to disrobe God's most glorious attribute of its immensity ; but in respect of not mingling some cautions to keep from presumption, as will appear in the ensuing counsels I shall commend for that purpose.

Upon this ground, I reason thus :—

A man may press and apply God's justice and the terrors of the law *too much* ; therefore also mercy and the comforts of the gospel too much : the consequence is clear ; for as the former may plunge into the gulf of despair, so the other may cast upon the rock of presumption. Nay, it is more than unanswerably strong, because we are far readier to apprehend and apply unto ourselves mercy than judgment ; and thousands are endlessly overthrown through presumption for one by despair. And the antecedent who will deny ? It is rather so preposterously applauded and pressed, that most, if a minister, even with his best discretion, reveal the whole counsel of God, and tell them that none shall be refreshed by Christ, but only those who "labour and are heavy laden" (Matt. xi, 28) ; that they must "humble themselves in the sight of the Lord," if they would have him "to lift them up" (James iv, 10) ; that none "shall have mercy" but such as "confess and forsake their sins" (Prov. xxviii, 13) ; that the mere civil man and lukewarm formal professor without holiness and zeal can never be saved (Heb. xii, 14 ; Revel. iii, 19) ; that all "the wicked shall be turned into hell," &c. (Psalm ix, 17) ; in a word, if he take the right course to bring men "from darkness to light, from Satan to the living God ;" by first wounding with the law before he heal with the gospel ;—I say, the most in this case are ready to cry out and complain that he throws wildfire, brimstone, and gunpowder into the consciences of men.

Conceive, therefore, I pray you,—

That there is in God, first, his justice ; and secondly, his mercy, both infinite and equal. Only in regard of man there is an inequality, for God may be said to be more merciful unto them that are saved, than just to them that are damned. For of damnation, the just cause is in man ; but of salvation, it is wholly from grace. In himself, and origi-

\* Cases of Conscience, book i, chap. vii, sect. 5 ; and chap. xi, sect. 1.

nally, they are both equal, and so are all his attributes ; but in respect of the exercise and expression upon his creatures, and abroad in the world, there is some difference. But for my purpose and our ministerial employment and commission, take notice,

That as the revealed effects of God's mercy are love, tender-heartedness, compassions, his own dear Son's precious heart-blood, pardon of sins, peace of conscience, unspeakable and glorious joy thereupon, evangelical pleasures, comfortable presence of the Spirit even in this life, and in the other world pleasures infinitely more than the stars of the firmament in number, even for ever and ever ; and all these upon all true penitents :—

So the revealed effects of his justice are “ indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish ; ” that sword, “ which will devour flesh ; ” those arrows, that “ drink blood ; ” that fiery anger, “ which will burn unto the lowest hell, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains ; ” that coming against, which is “ with fire and chariots like a whirlwind, to render anger with fury, and rebuke with flames of fire ; ” that meeting, which is as of a “ bear bereaved of her whelps, to rend the caul of the heart, and devour like a lion,” &c. ; all plagues, with the extremity, temporal, spiritual, eternal ; all the curses in this book of his ; all the torments of hell, to the utmost spark of those infernal flames ; and all these upon all impenitent sinners. Now God will be glorified both ways and by them both.

Give us leave, then, to give them both their due.

We are most willing and ready, as our great Master in heaven would have us (Isa. xl, 1, 2), and our blessed Saviour by his example doth teach us (Luke iv, 11), to convey by our ministry into every truly broken heart and bleeding soul the warmest blood that ever heated Christ's tender heart, and to keep back from the true penitent not any one grain of that immeasurable mine of all the rich mercies purchased with that precious blood.

Be content therefore on the other side that we open the armoury of God's justice, and “ reveal his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ; that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil,” &c. As we are ever ready to bind up the bruised spirit with the softest oil of God's sweetest mercy ; so let us, I pray you, have leave, in the equity of a just and holy proportion, to wound with the hammer of the law the hairy scalp of every one that goes on in his sin.

Let us deal faithfully even with wicked men, lest we

answer for the blood of their souls, by telling them, that as certainly as all the glorious comforts and blessed consequents of God's infinite mercy shall crown the heart and head of every true-hearted Nathanael for ever, so all the dreadful effects of his angry justice will at length seize upon the souls and confound the consciences of all unholy men with extremest severity and terror.

Let it be thus, then, and let our ministerial dispensation be in this manner. If thou be an impenitent person, I would tell thee that the utmost wrath of God, unquenchable and everlasting vengeance, all earthly and infernal plagues, are thy certain portion; but I would mollify and sweeten the bitterness of this sentence with assurance of mercy upon repentance, to prevent the assaults of despair.

On the other side; if the ministry of the word hath wrought upon thee effectually, and now thy truly humbled soul thirsts after Christ with a sincere hatred and opposition against all sin; I would assure thy troubled and trembling heart in the word of life and truth, of all those most precious blessings and sweetest comforts, which the book of God doth promise, and the blood of Christ hath bought. But withal I would commend unto thee some coolers and counter-poisons against presumption and falling to pharisaism.

For which purpose, and for prevention of danger and spiritual undoing by unskilful and indiscreet daubing in the case proposed, I come now to tender such counsels and cautions as these, or the like, which the faithful physician of the soul, according to occasions, circumstances, and present exigencies, may think fit to be mingled with administration of mercy, and wisely propounded to the afflicted party.

It may not prove unseasonable to speak thus, or in some such manner, to thy spiritual patient:—

I. If these things be truly and soundly so; if thou find and feel indeed such a mollified and melting spirit, such broken and bleeding affections in thy bosom, thou art certainly blessed. If that sorrowful soul of thine doth renounce from the very heart-root with special distaste and detestation all manner of sin; insatiably "thirst after righteousness;" unfeignedly resolve for the short remainder of a few and evil days to bend itself towards heaven in all new obedience; I say, if this be sincerely the holy disposition and resolution of thine heavy heart, notwithstanding all thy present terror and trouble of mind, thou art truly and everlastingly happy. Only take notice (lest my ministering of mercy be mistaken, or thy conceiving of comfort miscarry) that the "heart of man is deceitful above all things." A bottomless depth it is of falsehoods, dissemblings, hypocri-

sies ; an endless maze of windings, turnings, and hidden passages. No eye can search and see its centre and secrets, but that all-seeing One alone, which is ten thousand times brighter than the sun, to which the darkest nook of hell is as the noon-day ; and therefore not I nor any man alive can promise pardon, or apply the promises, but conditionally upon supposition, "if these things be so and so, as thou hast said." And the sincerity of thy heart and truth of these hopeful protestations, which we now hear from thee in this extremity (and I must tell thee by the way, such like may be enforced by the slavish sting of present terror, not fairly and freely flow from a true touch of conscience for sin ; I say this may be, though I hope better things of thee) ; the truth, as I said, both of thy heart and these affectionate promises will appear when the storm is over, and this dismal tempest, which hath overcast and shaken thy spirit with extraordinary fear and astonishment, is overblown. Thy course of life to come will prove a true touchstone, to try whether this be the kindly travail of the new birth, or only a temporary terror during the fit, by reason of the uncouthness and exquisiteness of this invisible spiritual torture, without true turning to Jesus Christ. If when the now-troubled powers of thy soul, which the wound of thy conscience hath cast into much distracted and uncomfortable confusion, shall recover their wonted calmness and quiet, thou turn unto thine old bias, humour, company, and conversation, it will then be more than manifest that this furnace of terror and temptation, wherein thou now liest and languishest, was so far from working thine heart to heavenliness and grace, that it hath hammered it to more hardness and ungraciousness—from purging and refining, that it hath occasioned more earthliness, epicurism, and raging affections in sensuality and sinful pleasures. But if, when thou art up again and raised by God's merciful hand out of the depth of this spiritual distress, into which the horrible sight and heavy weight of thy sins hath sunk thee ; if then thou express and testify thy true heartedness in these present solemn protestations, made now, as it were, in thy hot blood ; I mean, of thy hatred against sin, by an earnest opposition, watchfulness, and striving against all, especially that, which in thine unregenerate time stuck closest to thy bosom, of thine hunger and thirst after a comfortable fruition of God's face and favour, by a conscientious and constant pursuit and exercise of all good means and opportunities, of all his blessed ordinances appointed and sanctified for growth in grace, and bringing him nearer unto him ; of thy future new obedience and Christian walking, by plying

industriously and fruitfully with thy best endeavour and utmost ability those three glorious works of Christianity, preservation of purity in thine own soul and body, righteous dealing with all thou hast to do with, holy carriage towards God in all religious duties ; in a word, by “ denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present world,” of which the “ grace of God teacheth ” every true convert to make conscience (Tit. ii, 11, 12) ; — I say, if upon thy recovery this be thy course, thou art certainly new-created. Such blessed behaviour as this will infallibly evidence these present terrors to have been the pangs of thy new-birth, and thy happy translation from death to life, from the vanity and folly of sin into the light and liberty of God’s children.

II. Secondly, say unto him : When once that blessed fountain of soul-saving blood is opened upon thy soul in the side of the Son of God by the hand of faith for “ sin and for uncleanness ; ” then also must a counter-spring, as it were, of repentant tears be opened in thine humbled heart, which must not be dried up until thy dying day. This is my meaning (for every Christian hath not tears at command : the heart sometimes may bleed when the eyes are dry). Thou must be content to continue the current of thy godly sorrow upon that abominable sink of all the lusts, vanities, and villanies of thy dark and carnal time ; and also upon those frailties, infirmities, imperfections, defects, relapses, backslidings, which may accompany thy regenerate state, even until that body of sin which thou carriest about thee be dissolved by the stroke of death. As concerning thine old sins, and those that are past, it is not enough that now the fresh horror of them, and those grisly affrighting forms wherein they have appeared to the eye of thy wounded conscience, have wrought upon thy heart, by God’s blessing, some softness, heart-rising, remorse, and hatred : but thou must many and many a time hereafter, in the extraordinary exercises of renewed repentance, press thy penitent spirit to bleed afresh within thee, and draw water again out of the bottom of thy broken heart with those Israelites (1 Sam. vii, 6), and pour it out before the Lord in abundance of bitter tears for thy never-sufficiently-sorrowed-for abominations and rebellions against so blessed and bountiful a God.

Now the solemn times and occasions when we are called to this renewed repentance are such as these :—

1. When we are to perform some special services unto God ; because then out of a godly jealousy we may fear lest the face and favour of God, the love and light of his

countenance, may not lie so open unto us, by reason of the cloudy interposition of our former sins. 2. When we seek for any special blessing at God's merciful hands; because then out of a gracious fear we may suspect that our old sins may intrude, and labour to intercept and divert from our longing souls the sweet and comfortable influences of the throne of grace. It may seem that David, in the current of his prayer, saw his old sins charge upon him, and therefore cries out by the way, "Remember not the sins of my youth." 3. In the time of some great affliction and remarkable cross, when upon a new search and strict examination of our hearts and lives, we, humbling ourselves more solemnly again in the sight of the Lord, and mourning afresh over him whom we have pierced with our youthful pollutions and provoke daily with many woful failings, are wont to seek God's pleased face and our former peace, sanctification of it unto us at the present time, and the removal of it from us in due time in the name of Jesus Christ. 4. After relapse into some old secret lust, or fall into some new scandalous sin. David's remorse for adultery and murder brought his heart to bleed over his birth sin (Psalm li, 5). 5. Above all, upon all those mighty days of humiliation by prayer and fasting, public, private, or secret, wherein God's people wrestle with God by the omnipotency of prayer, and work so many wonders from time to time. Some there are also, who setting apart some special times to confer with God in secret, lay together before him the glorious catalogue of the riches of his mercy, reaching from everlasting to everlasting, all his favours, preservations, deliverances, protections, &c. from their first being to that time, and the abhorred catalogue of all their sins from Adam to that hour; original, both imputed and inherent; actual, both before and since their calling; and this they do with hearty desire of such different affections as they severally require. A serious and sensible comparing of which two together, makes sin a great deal more loathsome and the mercies of God more illustrious, and so proves effectual many times, by the help of the Holy Ghost, to soften their hearts extraordinarily, to make them weep heartily, and fills their soul with much joyful sorrow and humble thankfulness. 6. Upon our beds of death. Then, because we take our farewell of repentance, we should take our fill of it; because it is the last time we shall look upon our sins for that purpose, we should dismiss them with utmost and extreminest loathing. At such times and upon such occasions as these and the like, when thou art called to a more solemn, strict, and severe search and re-

view of thy old sins and former life, thou must renew this present repentance of thy new birth, make thine heart break again and bleed afresh with the sight of thy heretofore much doated upon but now most abhorred abominable courses. And so often also as thou lookest back upon them, thou must labour to abominate and abandon them with more resolute aversion and new degrees of detestation. Though it may be, by the mercies of God, they shall never be able to sting thee again with the same slavishness of guilty horror, yet thou must still endeavour in thy cool blood to strangle utterly thy former delight in them with more hearty additions of deadly hatred, and to be more and more humbled for them until thy ending hour. It is a very high happiness and blessing above ordinary to be able to look back upon thy choicest youthful pleasures and pollutions, without either sensual delight or slavish horror; with sincere hatred, holy indignation, and hearty mourning.

Now for the time to come, and those sins which hereafter the rebelliousness of thy sinful nature, and violence of the devil's temptations may force upon thee; if thy heart be now truly touched and conscience savingly enlightened, thou shalt find much matter, necessity, and use of continuing thy repentance so long as thy life lasts. In a leaking ship there must be continual pumping. A ruinous house must be still in repairing. These bodies of death we bear about us, are naturally liable to so many batteries and breaches by the assaults of original sin and other implacable enemies to our souls, that there is extreme need of perpetual watch and ward, repenting and repairing, lest the new man be too much oppressed and too often surprized by the many and cunning encounters of the old Adam. When thou art in company, solitary, busied about thy particular calling, there may suddenly arise in thine heart some greedy wish, some gross conceit, some vain, unclean, ambitious, revengeful thought: ejaculate presently a penitent sigh and fervent prayer for pardon of it in the passion of Christ. In thy family, perhaps amongst thy children and servants, by reason of some cross accident, thou mayest break out into some unadvised passionate speech, and disgrace thyself and profession by over-hasty intemperate heat, not without some danger of hurting and hardening those about thee thereby: get thee presently upon it into thy closet, or some place for that purpose, throw thyself down with a truly grieved and humbled soul before the throne of grace, and rise not until thou be reconciled unto thy God. If at any time, which God forbid,

thou be overtaken with some more public and scandalous sin, or dangerously haunted with some enormous secret lust; appoint for thyself a solemn day of humiliation, and then cry unto the Lord "like a woman in travail," and give him no rest until he return unto thee with the wonted favour and calmness of his pleased countenance. If Christians would constantly take to heart and ply this blessed business of immediately rising by repentance after every relapse and fall into sin, they would find a further paradise and pleasure in the ways of God than they ever yet tasted. This course continued with present feeling and after-watchfulness, would help excellently, by the blessing of God and exercise of faith, the only conduit of all spiritual comfort, to keep in their bosoms that which they much desire and often bewail the want of, a cheerful, bold, and heavenly spirit.

Neither let any here be troubled because I press the exercise and use both of renewed and continued repentance all our life long, as though thereupon the Christian's life might seem more uncomfortable. For we are to know that "sorrow after a godly sort," evangelical mourning, is mingled with abundance of spiritual joy, which doth infinitely surpass in sweetness and worth all worldly pleasures and delights of sense. Nay, whereas all the jovial good-fellow mirth of carnal men is but a flash of hellish folly, this is a very glimpse of heavenly glory. Let me tell you again how sweetly and truly that excellent divine of Scotland\* speaks of it: "There is," saith he, "more lightness of heart and true delight in the sorrow of the saints, than in the world's loudest laughter. For unspeakable joy is mingled with unutterable groans." The ancient fathers are of the same mind with this man of God. "Godly sorrow," saith Chrysostom, "is better than the joys of the world." Even as "the joy of the world is ever accompanied with sorrow, so godly tears beget continual and certain delight." Again, "Such a man as this now" (meaning him whose heart is inflamed with a heavenly heat), "despising all things here below, doth persevere in continual compunction, pouring out abundance of tears every day, and taking thence a great deal of pleasure †." "Let the penitent," saith Austin, "be always sorrowful for sin, and always rejoice for that sorrow ‡."

\* Rolloc, on John, chap. xi.

† Chrysostom, 2 Cor. vii, hom. 15; Matt. ii, hom. 6.

‡ De vera et falsa Penitentia, cap. xiii.

## CHAP. XIV.

Two Things more, concerning which the Afflicted is to be advised, and  
Two Things which the Minister is to heed for avoiding that Error.

III. BEWARE of two dangerous errors :—1. Either to conceive that thou mayest not admit of any comfort, or apply the promises comfortably, because thou still findest in thyself more matter of mourning and further humiliation. 2. Or to think, when thou hast once laid hold upon Christ's person and precious sufferings for the pardon of thy sins and quieting of thy soul, that then thou must mourn no more.

1. For the first know, that were our heads seas, and our eyes fountains of tears, and poured out abundantly every moment of our life; should our hearts fall asunder into drops of blood in our breast, for anguish and indignation against ourselves for our transgressions, yet should we come infinitely short of the sorrow and heart's grief which our many and heinous lusts and pollutions justly merit and exact at our hands. Therefore we cannot expect from ourselves any such sufficiency of sorrow or worthiness of weeping for our sins, as by the perfection and power thereof to win God's favour and draw his mercy upon us. Such a conceit were most absurd, senseless, and sinful, and would rather discover and taste of natural pride than true humility, and tend unhappily to the disgrace of God's mercies and gracing our own merits. True it is, had we a thousand eyes it were too little to weep them all out, for the very vanity of that one sinful sense. Had we a thousand hearts, and they should all burst with penitent grief and bleed to death for the sins of our souls, it were more than immeasurably, inconceivably insufficient. For were all this so, yet were it not this, but the heart's blood of Jesus Christ could make the Father's heart to yearn compassionately over us, or purchase pardon and acceptation at his hands. Tender therefore unto that poor troubled soul, who being sorely crushed and languishing under the burthen of his sins refuses to be raised and refreshed, endlessly pleading and disputing against himself out of a strong, fearful apprehension of his own vileness and unworthiness, putting off all comfort by this misconception, that no seas of sorrow, no measure of mourning, will suffice to enable him to come comfortably unto Jesus Christ;—I say, press upon such an one this true principle in the high and heavenly art of rightly comforting afflicted consciences :—

So soon as a man is truly and heartily humbled for all his sins, and weary of their weight, though the degree of his sorrow be not answerable to his own desire, yet he shall most certainly be welcome unto Jesus Christ.

It is not so much the amount and measure of our sorrow, as the truth and heartiness, which fits us for the promises and comforts of mercy. Though I must say this also, He that thinks he hath sorrowed enough for his sins, never sorrowed savingly.

2. For the second, which is more properly and specially pertinent to our purpose, take notice, that the blood of Christ being seasonably and savingly applied to thine humbled soul for the pardon and purgation of thy sin, must by no means dam and dry up thy well-spring of weeping, but only assuage and heal thy wound of horror. That precious balm hath this heavenly property and power, that it rather melts, softens, and makes the heart a great deal more weeping-ripe. If these be truly the pangs of the new birth wherewith thou art now afflicted, thou shalt find that thy now cleaving with assurance of acceptance unto the Lord Jesus will not so much lessen, hinder, or cease thy sorrow, as rectify, season, and sweeten it. If thy right unto that soul-saving passion be real, and thou cast thine eye with a believing, hopeful heart upon him whom thou hast therein pierced with thy sins (and those sins alone are said properly to have pierced Christ which at length are pardoned by his blood), thou canst not possibly but entertain excess of love unto thy crucified Lord; and sense of God's mercy shed into thy soul through his merits will make thee weep again, and fairly force thine heart to burst out abundantly into fresh and filial tears.

See how freshly David's heart bled with repentant sorrow upon his assurance by Nathan of the pardon of his sin (Psalm li). Thou canst not choose but mourn more heartily, evangelically, and (which should passingly please thee and sweetly perpetuate the spring of thy godly sorrow) more pleasingly unto God.

Take therefore special notice and heed of these two depths of the devil that I have now disclosed unto thee.

First. When thou art truly wrought upon by the ministry of the word, and now fitted for comfort, "believe the prophets," those ones of a thousand, learned in the right handling of afflicted consciences, "and thou shalt prosper." As soon as thy soul is soundly humbled for sin, open and enlarge it joyfully like the thirsty ground, that the refreshing dew and doctrine of the gospel may drop and distil

upon it as the small rain upon the parched grass. Otherwise—

(1.) Thou offerest dishonour and disparagement as it were to the dearness and tenderness of God's mercy, who is ever infinitely more ready and forward to bind up a broken heart, than it to bleed before him\*. Consider for this purpose the parable of the prodigal son (Luke xv, 11); he is there said to *go*, but the father *run*.

(2.) Thou mayest by the unsettledness of thy heavy heart unnecessarily unfit and disable thyself for the duties and discharge of both thy callings.

(3.) Thou shalt gratify the devil, who will labour mightily by his lying suggestions (if thou wilt not be counselled and comforted when there is cause) to detain thee in perpetual horror here, and in an eternal hell hereafter. Some find him as furiously and maliciously busy to keep them from comfort when they are fitted, as from fitness for comfort.

(4.) Thou art extremely unadvised, nay, very cruel to thine own soul. For whereas it might now be filled with "unspeakable and glorious joy" (1 Pet. i, 8), with "peace that passeth all understanding" (Phil. iv, 7), with evangelical pleasures, which are such as "neither eye hath seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. ii, 9), by taking Christ, to which thou hast a strong and manifold calling—"Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c. (Isa. lv, 1); "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi, 28); "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John vii, 37); "and let him that is athirst, come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revel. xxii, 17); yea, a commandment—"And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John iii, 23):—and yet, for all this, thou as it were wilfully standest out, will not "believe the prophets," forsakest thine own comfort, and liest still upon the rack of thy unreconcilement unto God.

Secondly. On the other hand, when the anguish of thy guilty conscience is upon sure ground something allayed and supplied with the oil of comfort, and thy wounded heart warrantably revived with the sweetness of the promises, as with "marrow and fatness," thou must not then

\* "And therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you" (Isa. xxx, 18). "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires" (Isa. liv, 11). "He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy" (Micah vii, 18).

either shut up thine eyes from further search into thy sins, or dry them up from any more mourning. But comfort of remission must serve as a precious eye-salve, both to clear their sight, that they may see more and with more detestation; and to enlarge their sluices, as it were, to pour out repentant tears more plentifully. Thou must continue ripping up and ransacking that hellish heap of thy former rebellions and pollutions of youth; still dive and dig into that body of death thou bearest about thee, for the finding out and furnishing thyself with as much matter of sound humiliation as may be, that thou mayest still grow viler and viler in thine own eyes, and be more and more humble until thy dying day. But yet so, that as thou holdest out in the one hand the clear crystal of God's pure law to discover the vileness and variety of thy sins, all the spots and stains of thy soul, so thou hold out in the other hand, or rather with the hand of faith lay hold upon the Lord Jesus, hanging bleeding and dying upon the cross for thy sake. The one is sovereign to save from slavish stings of conscience, bitterness of horror, and venom of despair. The other, mingled with faith, will serve as a quickening preservative to keep in thy bosom an humble, soft, and lowly spirit, which doth ever excellently fit to live by faith more cheerfully, to enjoy God more nearly, to apply Jesus Christ more feelingly, and to long for his coming more earnestly: in a word, to climb up more merrily those stairs of joy, which are pressed upon us by the holy prophet, "Be glad—rejoice—and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart" (Psalm xxxii, 11).

IV. Conceive that hypocrisy may lurk in very goodly outward forms and fairest promises and protestations of self-seeming earnest humiliation. Look upon Ahab (1 Kings xxi, 27); upon the Israelites (Psalm lxxviii, 34, 35). I mean not only gross hypocrisy, whereby men's false hearts teach them to deceive others; but also that which elsewhere I have styled *formal hypocrisy*, whereby men's own hearts deceive even their own selves. For I make no question but the promises of amendment which many make when they are pressed and panting under some heavy cross or grievous sickness, proceed from their hearts; I mean they speak as they think, and, for the present, purpose performance, who notwithstanding upon their recovery and restitution of former health and wonted worldly happiness, return "with the dog unto their vomit," and plunge again perfidiously into the cursed current of their disclaimed pleasures. But by the way, and in a word, to enlighten a perplexed point,

and prevent a scruple which may trouble true hearts indeed, who hold truth of heart in their repentances, services, and duties towards God to be their peculiar and a special touchstone to try and testify the soundness of their sanctification, the truth of their spiritual states, and a distinctive character from all sorts of unregenerate men, and all kinds of hypocrisy ; — I say, purposes and promises made from the heart in the sense I have stated, with earnest eager protestation while they are in anguish and extremity, and yet after deliverance and ease melt away “ as a morning cloud and like the early dew,” proceed from hearts rather affected only with sting of present horror, natural desire of happiness, misconceit that it is a light thing to leave sin, and the like, than truly broken and burthened with sight of their own vileness, sense of God’s displeasure, hatred of wickedness and former sensual ways ; or enamoured with the sweetness of Jesus Christ, amiableness of grace, and goodness of God, &c. Howsoever for my purpose certain it is, and too manifest by many woful experiences, that as it often falls out and fares with men in their corporal visitations and outward crosses, to wit, that while the storm and tempest beats sore upon them they run unto God as “ their rock, and inquire early after him,” as it is said of the Israelites, Psalm lxxviii, 34 ; but when once a hot gleam of former health and prosperity shines upon them again, they hie as fast out of God’s blessing into the warm sun ; from sorrow for sin to delight of sense ; from seeking God to security in their old ways : I say, even so it is sometimes also with men in afflictions of soul and troubles of conscience. While the agony and extremity is upon them, they grieve as though they would become true converts ; both promise and purpose many excellent things for the time to come, and a remarkable change ; but if once the fit be over, they “ start aside like a broken bow,” and fearfully fall away from what they have vowed, with horrible ingratitude and execrable villany, having been extraordinarily schooled and scorched, as it were, in the flames of horror, and warned to take heed by the very vengeance of hell. For the former, hear the experience of reverend divines. “ Many seeming,” saith one, “ to repent affectionately in dangerous sickness, when they have recovered have been rather worse than before.” “ I would have thought myself,” saith another, “ that many monstrous persons whom I have visited, when God’s hand upon them caused them to cry out and promise amendment, would have proved rare examples to others of true conversion unto God. But to my great grief, and to

teach me experience what becometh of such untimely fruits, they have turned back again as an arrow from a stone wall, and as the dog to his own vomit."

For the latter, I could here make it good also by too many experiences, were it convenient; but I forbear for some reasons to report them at this time.

I publish this point and speak thus, not to trouble any true converts about the truth of their hearts in their troubles of conscience: consciousness unto themselves of their new birth, already happily past; their prizing and cleaving to the Lord Jesus invaluablely, invincibly; their present new obedience, new courses, new company, new conversation, &c. makes it more than evident that they were savingly mollified and melted in the furnace of their spiritual afflictions, fashioned and framed by the hand of the Holy Ghost to be God's jewels: but to terrify those miserable men, who having tasted that transcendent torture of a wounded conscience, dare upon any terms look back again upon the world with delight and doating, and again commit those sins which have already stung their hearts with the very terrors of hell: or rather at this time to teach and tell the afflicted in conscience, that when the rich treasures of God's free mercy and "the unsearchable riches of Christ" are opened and offered unto him, he drink not so indiscreetly at first of that immeasurable sea as presently to fall into a surfeit of security. But to prevent miscarriage in a matter of so invaluable moment, let him rather mingle motives to humiliation with his medicine of mercy. Let him look well to the grounds and good speeches upon which the spiritual physician is encouraged to comfort him, that they shrink not in the wetting. Let him fear and attend his own deceitful heart with all narrow watch and a very jealous eye. Otherwise that false heart of his may prove a depth to drown his own dear soul in the pit of endless perdition. For in time of extremity and terror, especially of conscience, it may seem pliable and promise fair, and yet when it comes to performance and practice, either impudently and perfidiously wallows again in open wickedness, or rests only in a "form of godliness" at the best. Let him be "stedfast in the covenant," and then he may be sure that his "heart was upright," and that he did not "flatter with his mouth, or lie unto God with his tongue."

## CHAP. XV.

The Fifth Advice to the Afflicted. Two Directions to the Minister, to be observed towards his Patient.

V. SINCE thou art now upon terms of turning unto God, taking profession upon thee, and giving up thy name unto Christ, the blessedest business that ever thou wentest about, be well advised, consider seriously what thou undertakest, and cast deliberately beforehand what it is like to cost thee. Thou must make an account to become the drunkard's song, and to have those "that sit in the gate to speak against thee;" the vilest of men to rail upon thee, and the wisest of the world to laugh at thee. Thou must be content to live a despised man, to be scoffed at, to "be hated of all men," to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts;" to look upon the world, set out in the gaudiest manner with all her baits and Babels of riches, honours, favours, greatness, pleasures, &c. as upon an unsavoury rotten carcass. Thou and the world must be as two dead bodies upon one bier, without any delightful mutual commerce or intercourse, strangers and stark dead one unto another in respect of thy any farther trading with the vanities thereof. For keeping a good conscience, standing on God's side and for Christ's sake, thou must deny thyself thy worldly wisdom, carnal reason, corrupt affections; thy acceptance with the world, favour of great ones, credit and applause with the most; thy passions, profit, pleasures, possibility of rising and growing great; thy nearest friends, dearest companions, ease, liberty, life; and grow by little and little into Esther's most noble and invincible resolution, when doing God's will threateneth any earthly danger; "And if I perish, I perish;" but not to perish so is everlastingly to perish, and so to perish is to be saved for ever. Thou must thus resolve upon this self-denial when thou first enterest into profession, or else thou wilt never be able to hold out in thy spiritual building, or conquer in the Christian warfare (See and consider the occasion, and how earnestly Christ enjoins it, Matt. xvi, 24; Luke xiv, 26, &c., and presses it with two parables.); but all will come to nought, and thou cursedly conclude in open apostasy, gross hypocrisy, or self-deceiving formality. Consider the young man in the gospel. He came hastily to Jesus Christ, and would needs be his disciple and follower upon the sudden. But alas! he did woefully mistake. Little did he know, neither indeed would know, what belonged unto it. That the servant of such an heavenly Master must be no earth-worm; that every one of his dis-

ciples must "take up their cross and follow him;" for his sake part with any thing, every thing, be it riches, honours, credit, pleasures, &c. And therefore when once Christ for the trial of his heart had bid him "go and sell that he had," &c., he had soon done; he was quickly gone. Now had this young man gone away without this lesson, he had gone away a disciple as well as any other, and perhaps as jolly a professor as the forwardest of them all; and that both in his own strong opinion and uncharitable misconceit of the rest who were true of heart: as Judas did a long time; and the foolish virgins all their life long. Too many such professors as he would have proved, are to be found even in this noon-tide of the gospel abroad in the world; who being at their first entrance into profession not soundly humbled, nor laying a sure foundation; not resolved upon an universal self-denial, nor weighing with due forecast what it will cost them; do afterward misbehave themselves upon any gainful occasion, or greater trial and temptation, or being put to it indeed. They are wont from time to time to discover their rottenness, open the mouths of the profane, and shame all. They are like unto reeds, which in a calm stand upright and seem stiff and strong; but let the tempest break in upon them and they bend any way. While their temporal state is untouched, their outward happiness unhazarded, they seem resolute, thorough, and courageous; but let a storm of persecution be raised against them; let them be put into a great fright that if they stand to it they may be undone, &c. and then like cowards they hide their heads, pull in the horns, and shamefully shrink in the wetting; unhappily holding it better to sleep in a whole skin than with a good conscience. Like the eagle, they soar aloft with many good religious shows and representations, but they still keep their eye upon the prey; and therefore when advantage is offered they will basely stoop from forwardness, honesty, generosity, humanity, any thing, to seize upon a worldly commodity, office, honour, some earthly pelf, and transitory nothing. Some of these, after profession for some time, fall quite away from it, and turn epicures or worldlings, if not scorers and persecutors. Others hold on in a plodding course of formal Christianity all their life long; and at last depart this life like the foolish virgins, and in that formal manner I told you of before. Neither be thou disheartened with this counsel of leaving all for Christ. For thou shalt be no loser, but a great gainer thereby. Besides "eternal life in the world to come," thou shalt receive a hundredfold now in this time," as Christ himself tells thee, Mark x, 30. If thou part with worldly joys, thou shalt have quiet in

the Holy Ghost, spiritual joy unspeakable and glorious, nearer familiarity with God, dearer communion with Jesus Christ, &c. ; to which the pleasures of ten thousand worlds, were they all to be enjoyed at once, were but extremest pain. If thou lose thine husband, he that made thee will be in his stead unto thee, "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name" (Isa. liv, 5). If thou lose thy father, the all-sufficient Jehovah, blessed for ever, "will pity thee as a father pitieth his children" (Psalm ciii, 13). If thou lose thy friends and the world's favour, thou shalt have all and the only excellent upon earth to love thee dearly, and to pray heartily for thee (Psalm xvi, 3); in a word, if thou lose all for Christ's sake, he will be unto thee "all in all" (Coloss. iii, 11). And in him all things shall be thine in a far more sweet and eminent manner. "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii, 21, 22, 23).

VI. When the spiritual physician shall see the soil of his patient's heart well softened with sorrow for sin, comfortably warmed with refreshing beams of favour from the face of Christ, and so seasonably fitted to enter a Christian course, and to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," let him throw in some timely seeds of zeal, holy preciseness, undaunted courage, and unshaken resolution about the affairs of heaven, and in the cause of God; from such quickening scriptures and excellent examples as these, Luke xiii, 24; Rom. xii, 11, 12; Ephes. v, 15; Phil. i, 10, 11; Matt. xi, 12; Revel. iii, 16; Ruth iv, 11; Esther iv, 16; Nehem. vi, 11; 1 Kings xxii, 14; Heb. xi, 24, 25; 1 Sam. xx, 32; Acts xxi, 13, &c. that it may be happily preserved from the rank and flourishing, but rotten and fruitless weed of formality and lukewarmness; which pestilent canker, if it once take root in the heart, it will never suffer the herb of grace, if I may so speak, the heavenly unfading flowers of saving grace, to grow by it while the world stands. Nay, and will prove one of the strongest blots to bar them out; and the most boisterous cart-ropes to pull down extraordinary vengeance upon the head of the party. For as a loathsome vomit is to the stomach of him that casts it out, so are lukewarm professors to the Lord Jesus (Revel. iii, 16). I marvel many times what such men mean, and what worship, service, and obedience they would have the mighty Lord of heaven and earth to accept. He offers to us in the ministry his own blessed Son to be our dear and everlasting husband, his person with all the

rich and royal endowments thereof, the glory and endless felicities above, his own thrice-glorious and ever-blessed self to be enjoyed through all eternity, which is the very soul of heavenly bliss, and life of eternal life. Do you think it then reasonable or likely that he will ever accept at our hands a heartless, formal outwardness; a cold, rotten carcass of religion; that we should serve ourselves in the first place, and him in the second; that we should spend the prime and flower of our loves, joys, services, upon some abominable bosom sin; and then proportion out to the everlasting God, mighty and terrible Creator and Commander of heaven and earth, only some outward religious forms and conformities, and those also so far only as they hurt not our temporal happiness, but may consist with the entire enjoyment of some inordinate lust, pleasure, profit, or preferment? Prodigious folly, nay, fury to their own souls! This very one most base and unworthy conceit of so great a God, and his due claims, meriteth justly exclusion from the kingdom of heaven with the foolish virgins for ever. My counsel therefore is, when the spiritual patient hath passed the tempestuous sea of a troubled conscience, and is now upon terms of taking a new course, that by 'all means he take heed that he run not upon this rock. It is better to be key-cold than lukewarm; and that the milk boil over than be raw.

VII. I though it be an ordinary, yet it is a dangerous and utterly undoing error and deceit to conceive that all is ended when the afflicted party is mended, and hath received ease and enlargement from the terrible pressures of his troubled conscience; to think that after the tempest of present terror and rage of guiltiness be allayed and overblown there needs no more to be done. As though the new birth were not ever infallibly and inseparably attended with new obedience. As though when once the soul is soundly and savingly struck through, humbled, and prepared for Christ by the terrifying power of the law revealing the foulness of sin and fierceness of Divine wrath, which set on by the "spirit of bondage" is able like a mighty thunder to break and tear in pieces the iron sinews of the most stubborn and stony heart, there followed not hearty showers of repentant tears, never to be dried up until our ending hour (as I taught before), when all tears shall be everlastingly wiped away with God's merciful hand: and that the Sun of righteousness did not presently break forth upon that happy soul, to dispel the hellish clouds of sensuality, lust, lying in sin, &c. and to enlighten, inflame, and fill it with the serenity and clear sky as it were of sanctification and purity, a kindly fervour of

zeal for God's glory, good causes, good men, and keeping a good conscience and fruitful influence of sobriety, righteousness, and holiness for ever after. And therefore, if upon recovery out of trouble of conscience there follow not a continued exercise of repentance, both for sins past, present, and to come, as you heard before, an universal change in every power and part both of soul and body, though not in perfection of degrees, yet of parts; a heart-rising hatred and opposition against all sin; a shaking off old companions, brethren in iniquity, all Satan's good-fellow revelers; a delight in the word, ways, services, sabbaths, and saints of God; a conscientious and constant endeavour to express the truth of the protestations and promises made in time of terror, as I told you before, &c.;—in a word, if there follow not a new life, "if all things do not become new" (2 Cor. v, 17), there is no new-birth in truth: all is nought, and to no purpose in the point of salvation.

They are then miserable comforters, physicians of no value; nay, of notorious spiritual bloodshed, who having neither acquaintance with, nor much caring for the manner, means, method, any heavenly wisdom, spiritual discretion, or experimental skill in managing aright such an important business; if any ways they can assuage the rage and still the cries of a vexed, guilty conscience, they think they have done a worthy work, though after their daubing there be nothing left behind in it but a senseless scar; nay, and perhaps more searedness and benumbedness brought upon it, because it was not kindly wrought upon in the furnace of spiritual affliction, and rightly cured.

I fear many poor souls are fearfully deceived, who being recovered out of terrors of conscience too suddenly, unseasonably, or one way or other unsoundly, conceive presently they are truly converted, though afterward they be the very same men, of the same company and conditions they were before, or at best bless themselves in the seeming happiness of a half conversion\*.

\* By this half Herodian conversion they may leave many sins, and "do many things," hear the best ministers gladly, respect and countenance them, &c.; and yet for all this, in respect of their own personal salvation, as well never a whit as never the better; as well not at all as not thorough-stitch.

## CHAP. XVI.

Two Cases wherein pangs of Conscience are not healed, whatever they seem.

FOR a more full discovery of this mischief, and prevention of those miseries which may ensue upon this last miscarriage, let me acquaint you with four or five passages out of pangs of conscience, which still lead amiss and leave a man to the devil still, and for all his fair warning by the smart of a wounded spirit, drown him in the works of darkness and ways of death.

1. Some, when by the piercing power and application of the law, their consciences are pressed with the terrible and intolerable weight of their sins; and the worm that never dies, which hath been all this while dead drunk with sensual pleasures, is now awaked by the hand of Divine justice, and begins to sting; they presently with unspeakable rage and horror fall into the most abhorred and irrecoverable dungeon of despair. The flames of eternal fire seize upon them even in this life; they are in hell upon earth, and damned, as it were, above ground. Such they are commonly who all their life long have been contemners of the gospel ministry; scorers of the "good way;" quenchers of the Spirit; revolters from good beginnings and profession of grace; harbourers of some secret, vile, abominable lusts in their hearts against the light of their conscience; close agents for popery and profaneness; plausible tyrants against the power of godliness, and such other like notorious champions of the devil, and infamous rebels to the Highest Majesty: whom, since they have been such, and have so desperately and so long "despised the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering, leading them to repentance," God most justly leaves now in the evil day: when once the hot transitory gleam of worldly pleasures is past, and his judgments begin to grow upon their thoughts like a tempestuous storm; and death to stand before them irresistible like an armed man; and sin to lie at the door like a bloodhound; and the guilty conscience to gnaw upon the heart like a vulture, &c.;—I say, then he leaves them in his righteous judgment to sink or swim, "to eat the fruit of their own ways" to the fulness of that unquenchable wrath which by their innumerable sinful provocations, impenitency, and unbelief, they have "treasured up against this day of wrath." That raging worm, which never dies in the damned, and naturally breeds in every graceless

conscience by their insatiable surfeit in sin, and greedy "drinking in iniquity like water," grows so strong and to such a strange bigness, that taking advantage, especially in the time of terror, of their weakness and confusion of spirit upon the bed of death, at some season of irrecoverable danger, it surprises them upon the sudden with unexpected hellish armies of guiltiness and horror, and overthrows them quite, horse and man, never to rise again in this world or the world to come. Then would those woful wretches who would never be warned betime, give ten thousand worlds, if they had them, for one moment of that merciful time of grace which they have cursedly long abused, for the benefit of the ministry which they have insolently scorned, for a drop of that precious blood which by their desperate villanies and hatred to be reformed they have trampled under foot. But, alas! no mercy, no blessing, no comfort will then be had, though, with profane Esau, they seek it with tears, and throw their ræful and piercing cries into the air with hideous groans and yelling. And therefore turning their eye upon their torments will roar out like those sinful hypocrites, Isaiah xxxiii, 14, with unutterable anguish of spirit, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" "In the morning they shall say, Would God it were even; and at even they shall say, Would God it were morning; for the fear of their hearts wherewith they shall fear, and for the sight of their eyes which they shall see" (Deut. xxviii, 67). In their lifetime they behaved themselves like cruel beasts and bloody goads in the sides of the saints and against their sincerity; and now at last themselves are caught with a witness, and lie upon their beds of extremity and terror "like wild bulls and beasts in a net, full of the fury of the Lord."

II. Others there are, who finding their sins discovered, and their consciences wounded by the light and power of the word, and now feeling sadness, heavy-heartedness, uncouth terrors, much perplexity and anxiety of spirit coming upon them, address themselves presently and have speedy recourse to the "arm of flesh," outward mirth, carnal contentment, and such other miserable comforters. They falsely suppose, and to their own utter and everlasting overthrow, that these spiritual pangs that are now upon them, which if rightly managed might prove a happy preparative and legal artillery, as it were, to break the iron bars and open the everlasting doors of their souls that the King of Glory might come in, be nothing but fits of melancholy, or sour and unseasonable effects and impressions of

some puritanical ministry and dangerous temptations to despair. And therefore they hie out of them as fast as they can, by posting after worldly pleasures, pastimes, plays, music, gaming, merry company, jovial meetings of good fellowship, taverns, ale-houses, visits, entertainments, improvement of their chief carnal contentment, &c. ; if not to wizards and even to light a candle at the devil for light-someness of heart. Thus, I know not whether with more sin or folly, they endeavour to come unto themselves again by the mirth and madness of wine, earthly joy, carnal counsel, &c. ; wherein they are not unlike those idolatrous Israelites, who while they burnt up their children in sacrifice to Moloch, filled their ears with noise of instruments, lest by the rueful cries of their little babes they should be moved to pity, and so stayed in the cruel service of that blood-sucking idol. Just so these men of pleasure and perdition do sinfully seek to stop the guilty clamours of their vexed consciences with the comforts of this life and sensual joy, while their souls are sacrificing to Satan, and making fit fuel for the fire of hell, lest by listening to their cries and controlments they should be stirred up to take compassion of their own poor immortal souls, and be stopped in the pursuit of their fugitive follies and delights of sense. But, alas ! in so doing they are also like a man in a burning fever, who lets down cold drink eagerly and merrily, because in the extremity of thirst it cools him a little ; but after a while he shall find the heat, the pain, and the danger all doubled upon him. Earthly pleasures may for the present still the noise of an accusing conscience, and seem somewhat to allay its guilty rage, but assuredly they will afterwards kindle such a fire in the bowels of these miserable men as will burn even to the very bottom of hell, and blow them up body and soul with irrecoverable ruin for ever. He that goes about to cure the wound of his conscience for sin with sensual delight, is as if to help the toothache he should knock out his brains, or when he is stung with a wasp should rub with a nettle the smarting place, or finding no good by physic should run unto wizards ; as if in extremity of thirst he should drink rank poison to quench it, apply a venomous plaister to his sore, and prop up his falling roof with burning firebrands ; remedies far worse and more pestilential than the malady, for they either plunge them deeper into the dungeon of melancholy and heavy-heartedness, or else draw a skin only over the spiritual wound, whereby it festers and rankles underneath more dangerously. For thus stopping the mouth of that

never-dying worm, that insatiable wolf in the mean time doth make it, when there is no more supply of carnal pleasures whereupon it feeds for a while, to fall more furiously upon the conscience that bred it, and to gnaw more ragingly by reason of its former restraint and enforced diversion.

I know full well, Satan is right well pleased, and doth much applaud this pestilent course of theirs, and therefore he helps forward this accursed business all he can, of abandoning and banishing all trouble of mind for sin with worldly toys. For ordinarily out of his cruel cunning thus he proceeds in these cases:—

1. In the first place, and above all, he labours might and main to detain men in that height of hard-heartedness, that they may not be moved at all with the ministry, or suffer the sword of the Spirit to pierce. And then like “a strong man armed” he possesseth their bodies and souls, which are his palace, with much peace, and disposeth them wholly in any hellish service at his pleasure. Thus he prevails with a world of men amongst us. They hear sermon after sermon, judgment upon judgment, and yet are no more stirred with any penitent astonishment for sin or saving work of the word, than the very seats whereon they sit, the pillars to which they lean, or dead bodies upon which they tread. They are ordinarily such as these:—First; Ignorants of two sorts: (1.) Unskilled both in the rules of reason and religion; such are our extremely sottish and grossly ignorant people, which swarm among us in many places, to the great dishonour of the gospel, by reason of the want of catechising and other discipline. (2.) Led by the light of natural conscience to deal something honestly, but idiots in the great mystery of godliness; such are our merely civil honest men. Secondly; Those that are wise in their own conceits (Isa. v, 21), being strongly persuaded of their good estate to God-ward, whereas, as yet, they have no part at all in the first resurrection: such as those, Matt. vii, 22; and xxv, 11. Thirdly; All such as are resolved not to take sin to heart (See Isa. xxviii, 15). These either, (1.) Make God all of mercy; (2.) Or preserve a secret reservation in their hearts to repent hereafter; (3.) Or have so prodigiously hardened their hearts that they fear not the judgment to come; (4.) Or with execrable villany desire to extinguish the very notions of a Deity by a kind of an affected atheism, and, being drowned in sensuality, labour not to believe the word of God, that they may sin without all check or reluctance.

2. But if it fall out by God's blessing that the word once begin to get within a man, and to work terror and trouble of mind for sin; so that he sees him grow sensible of his slavery, weary of his former ways, and like enough to break the prison and be gone; then doth he seriously observe and attend which way the party inclines, and how he may be most easily diverted, that he may thereafter proportion his plots and attempts against him the more prosperously.

(1.) If he find him to have been a horrible sinner, of a sad and melancolic disposition, much afflicted with outward crosses, &c., he then lays load upon his affrighted soul with all his cunning and cruelty, that if it be possible he may drive him to despair. For this purpose he makes keen the sting of the guilty conscience itself all he can, sharpens the empoisoned points of his own fiery darts; adds more grisliness to his many hateful transgressions, more horror to the already flaming vengeance against sin, &c.; that, if God so permit, he may be sure to strike desperately home, and sink him deep enough into that abhorred dungeon.

(2.) But if he perceive him not to have been infamous and noted for any notorious sins, by natural constitution to be merrily disposed, impatient of heavy-heartedness, and formerly much addicted to good-fellowship; if he spy him to strive and struggle for disentanglement out of these uncouth terrors, and re-enjoyment of his former worldly delights and jovial companions;—I say, then he is most forward to follow and feed his humour this way also, that so he may stifle and utterly extinguish the work of the spirit of bondage in the very beginning. And to this end he blunts with all the cunning he can the sting of a man's own conscience, and quite removes his own: he procures and offers all occasions of outward contentment, he furnishes his fellows in iniquity and the devil's proctors with pernicious eloquence and store of enticements to bring him back again to their bent and beastly courses; he ministers his own delicious potions of carnal pleasure to cast his conscience asleep again. In brief, he leaves no policy, plot, or practice unassayed, unattempted, to make the power of the law unprofitable unto him, and to drown all his sorrow for sin in sensual drunkenness.

This, then, I make the second pestilent passage out of pangs of conscience; to wit, when a man to decline them is driven by the subtlety of Satan and perverseness of his own flesh, if not to wizards and fortune-tellers, as they call them, and other such oracles of the devil, yet at best to human helps, to worldly wisdom, to outward mirth, good-fellowship, pleasant company, his heaps of gold, hoards of

wealth, riches, pastures, variety of choicest pastimes; nay, for ease to any thing, even to drinking, dancing, dicing, masking, revelling, roaring, or any other such ribald, bedlam, and raging fooleries.

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## CHAP. XVII.

A Third Case, wherein Pangs of Conscience may seem to be healed and are not; with the Discovery of Men's Errors in that kind.

III. SOME there are, who pass out of trouble of mind for sin and legal terrors into a kind of an artificial, enforced, unsound, untimely, and counterfeit peace of conscience. I mean it thus: when a man's carnal heart, wounded by the terrifying power of the word, with sight and horror of his former wicked ways; but weary of the wound, impatient of spiritual heaviness, wilfully set and resolved obstinately against the holy severities of the school of repentance, mortification, godly strictness, walking with God, &c., and withal meeting with some dauber with untempered mortar, who is very ready to heal his heart with sweet words, saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jer. vi, 14);—I say, in this case snatches hold of comfort, and applies the promises of mercy and salvation before they belong unto him; before he be searched to the quick, sounded to the bottom, and soundly humbled; before the spirit of bondage hath its perfect work, and he be kindly fitted for Jesus Christ. For this purpose they are wont to wrest, abuse, misapply many places in the book of God; the unskilful physicians in application, and the deluded patients in apprehension of them; even such as these: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi, 28). Yea, but they are not weary of all their sins, but only troubled with the present terror; nor willing to take upon them the cross of Christ. Well enough content they are to take him as a Saviour to preserve them from hell, but not as a lord, a king, and a husband, to serve, obey, and love him. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x, 13). Yea, but they do not consider that many also shall cry "Lord, Lord," (Matt. vii, 22, and xxv, 11) and yet be excluded from eternal bliss; and therefore "all that call savingly upon the name of Christ, must depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii, 19). But they upon recovery will by no means depart from their darling delight. "He that believeth on

the Son hath everlasting life" (John iii, 36) Yea, but justifying faith purifies the heart (Acts xv, 9), fills it with dear affections unto heavenly things, deadens it to the world, and divorces it quite from all former carnal pleasures and companionship. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Revel. xxi, 6). Yea, but they thirst only for salvation, not for sanctification; for mercy, not for grace; for happiness, not for holiness, &c. These men, as well as the second sort, will by no means pass through the pangs of the new birth into the holy path. They wickedly misconceive, out of the rotten principles of their own worldly wisdom, prejudice against the power of godliness, and pestilent persuasions of "pillow-sewers under their elbows," that in so doing they shall be utterly undone and never have a good day afterward; but, to speak in their own language, fall presently into the hands of the puritans, into the strict tortures and hypocritical miseries of preciseness, into sourness, unsociableness, melancholy; and indeed into a state only a step short of distraction and madness. And these therefore cast about to get out of trouble of mind and sense of Divine terror with as great impatience and precipitation as the former, only more plausibly and with seemingly fairer, but truly false satisfaction to their own souls. For the former rush with furious indignation out of these spiritual dejections of conscience, as unmanly fears not fit for worthy spirits and men of jovial resolution, into greater excess and variety of worldly delights and sensual looseness; and so ordinarily become afterward very notorious and more desperate enemies to the kingdom of Christ. Because the power of the word hath once stung their carnal hearts with some remorseful terror, they ever after heartily hate the sound and searching ministry, and managers thereof, the inflictors of their smart; for no other reason in the world but that they tell them the truth, and thereupon torment them before their time, that so, if they be not wanting unto themselves, they may escape the torments of eternity hereafter. And they set themselves against godly Christians with incompatible estrangement and implacable spite, only because they are professors of self-denial, holy strictness, nonconformity to the world, repentance, mortification, &c.; the entertainment and exercise whereof they furiously more detest and fly from, than the death of their bodies and damnation of their souls. But these latter pass more plausibly out of trouble of conscience, and take a fairer course of the two, though it prove but an imaginary and counterfeit cure. For they labour to close up their spiritual wound with comfort

out of the word, and promise peace to their troubled hearts from the promises of life. But herein they fail and fearfully deceive themselves, in that they conceive the first fits and qualms, as it were, of legal terror, to be saving repentance; a general speculative apprehension of Christ's passion, to procure a special pardon for all their sins; fruitless speculations of faith, to prevent and secure them from the wrath that is to come; a mere verbal profession, to be forwardness enough except a man would be too precise. Upon the first fright and feeling the smart of a confused remorse and horror for sin, without any further penitent wading into particulars, or thorough search into their hearts, lives, consciences, and callings; without suffering the work of the spirit of bondage to drive them to Christ, and a resolution to sell all, &c.; they presently apply, by the strong delusion of their own idle groundless conceit, all the gracious promises and privileges of God's child to their unhumbled souls, and enforce their understandings, by a violent greedy error, to think they are justified by such an artificial heartless notion, which falsely they call faith: and so, resting in a counterfeit persuasion that they are true converts, ordinarily turn carnal professors.

These are a kind of people who have no more spiritual life than a dead faith can infuse into them; no more comfort in the communion of saints than an outward correspondence in profession, speculative discourses of religion, and meetings at the means of grace, can yield; no more interest or right to heaven, than a bold presumptuous confidence, built first upon their own wilful fancy, and seconded with Satan's lying suggestion, can give them: whose sorrow for sin at the most is commonly no more than "afflicting their souls for a day, and bowing down their heads like a bulrush, without loosing the bands of wickedness or departing from iniquity," whose conversion is nothing but a speculative passage from a confused apprehension of sin to a general application of Christ, without any sensible or saving alteration in their ways: whose new obedience consists only in a formal conformity to outward exercises of religion, without all true zeal, life, heartiness, holiness, or indeed honest dealing with their brethren. But these men are to know, that Christ's blood never pardoned any man's soul from sin, whose spirit the power thereof did not purge from guile. It never saves any one from hell whom it doth not first in some good measure season with holiness and heavenly life. In vain do they build comfort upon his passion, who do not conscientiously conform to the practice of his word. And let them further be informed, for a more clear discovery of

their gross and damnable self-deceit, that howsoever a dead faith, according to its name and nature, enters (if it hath any being at all) into the understanding without any remarkable motion, sense, and alteration; yet that faith which truly justifies, pacifies, purifies, mortifies, sanctifies, and saves, is evidently discernible by—First, many stirring preparatives; sight and sense of a man's miserable state by nature, of his sinfulness and cursedness, humbling himself in the sight of the Lord," fearful apprehensions wrought by the spirit of bondage; illumination, conviction, legal terrors, &c. Secondly, violent affections about the infusing of it, which are wont to be raised in the humbled heart by the Holy Ghost; extreme thirst, inflamed desires, vehement longings, unutterable groanings of spirit, prizing and preferring the person and passion of Christ before the possession of infinite worlds; willingness to "sell all," to part with any thing for him, though never so dear or so much doated upon heretofore; with pleasure, riches, preferments, "a right hand, a right eye," liberty, life, &c. Nay, in such a case, if even hell itself should stand between Jesus Christ and a poor soul, he would most willingly pass through the very flames thereof to embrace his blessed crucified Lord in the arms of a lively faith. Thirdly, inseparable consequents and companions: 1. A hearty and everlasting falling out with all sin. 2. Sanctification throughout in body, soul, spirit, and calling, and in every power, part, and passage thereof, though not in perfection of degrees, yet in truth and effectually. 3. A set and solemn course of new obedience, spent principally in self-sobriety, righteousness towards our brethren, and holiness towards God.

Many unfaithful men in the ministry, both in their public teaching, and private visitations of the sick, have much to answer for in this point; who for want of skill in that highest art of saving souls; of familiarity with God, and secret working of his Spirit; of experience in their own change, and of the spirit of discerning, &c. many times concur with such miserable men to mar all, in stifling the very first stirrings of legal remorse, by healing the wounds of their conscience with sweet words before they be searched and sounded to the bottom; and by an unseasonable and indiscreet heaping a great deal of comfort there, where as yet a good ground-work of true humiliation is not soundly laid. Many and lamentable are the spiritual miseries in those places where such daubers with untempered mortar have the direction, who never passed through the pangs of the new birth themselves, were never feelingly acquainted with the wonderful dealings of God in that great miracle of a

man's conversion; or trained up experimentally in the school of temptations, painful exercises of mortification and counterminings against the depths, wiles, devices, and stratagems of the devil. The blessed prophet paints them to the life, and denounces a dreadful woe against such flattering and foolish prophets (Ezek. xiii). A ship-master, skilful only in astronomy and other speculative passages of the art of navigation, is nobody in conducting men safely over some dangerous sea, to him that beside sufficiencies of art, is furnished also with experimental skill in those parts, by passing formerly that way himself, and having discovered those dangers of ruin and hidden rocks, which the other man might easily run upon. Give me a man in whom variety and profoundness of best learning doth concur in the highest degree of excellency; yet if his own heart be not soundly wrought upon and seasoned with saving grace, himself experimentally seen into the mystery of Christ and secrets of sanctification; as he shall be hardly able to wound other men's consciences, and pierce them to the quick, so he will be found very unfit to manage aright the spiritual miseries of a troubled soul, and to transport it savingly through the tempestuous terrors and temptations incident to the new creation, into the port of true peace and paradise of the blessed brotherhood. A dreadful and tender point it is to deal with distressed consciences; so many depths of Satan and deceits of man's heart mingle themselves with business of so great consequence. Even a well-meaning man without much heed and good experience, both in the point and the party, may err dangerously and be much deceived herein. I have heard from a man of conscience and credit, besides many and many in the same kind, of a fearful imposture to this purpose. "A man who for the world was well enough, visited with some trouble of mind for his sins, sent for a minister to comfort him. He, it seems, not sounding him to the bottom, or searching to the quick, heaped upon him unseasonably and too soon, mercies and hopes of spiritual safety. Amongst other things he asked him, whether formerly he had ever felt testimonies and refreshings of God's favour and love. Yea, answered the party (and here take notice of a notorious depth of the devil); once riding alone upon the way in such a place, I grew upon the sudden very lightsome and light-hearted, &c. (This was but a flash of Satan's angelical glory, cunningly to lighten and lead him the way to further confusion.) Why then, replied the minister, you may build upon it. God is constant in his favours; and whom he loves once he loves for ever. Hereupon the patient was

presently healed of his wounded heart, and after fell into his former courses, and grew fully as profane as he was before." Amongst the many important passages of our ministerial employment, I fear this weighty affair of visiting the sick is passed over also (more is the pity!) with much ignorance, slightness, and neglect. It is incredible to consider how fearfully many offend, and what a deal of hurt they do by observing one plodding general form, and that a poor one too, towards all patients promiscuously, without any judicious discretion in distinguishing the variety of spiritual states, the different degrees of unregenerateness, former courses of life, &c. Commonly their carriage in such cases is the same to the notorious sinner, the mere civil man, gross hypocrite, carnal gospeller, formal professor, backslider, the weak and strong, the tempted and untempted Christian. If they but hear from the sick man a general acknowledgment of his sins, formal cries for mercy and pardon, earnest desires to die the death of the righteous, &c. which may be easily and ordinarily found in a pharisee or foolish virgin, as you have heard before, they will presently needs persuade him that he is as surely a saved man as if he were in heaven already. Herein resembling, saith Marbury on Psalm xxxii, "a foolish shepherd, who wanting skill to help his poor sheep out of the ditch, is driven to play the miserable comforter, and to take some other indirect course (as many use to do in such cases), to cut the sheep's throat in time to make him man's meat; lest it should be said he died in a ditch." Many and many a time do such fellows as these empty and discharge their common place books of all the phrases of mercy and comfort, collected curiously and industriously for that purpose, upon those men who were never acquainted with the ways of God in their life-time, nor with the truth of humiliation, or truly with the great work of repentance upon their beds of death.

Those formal churchmen who stood about Marshal Biron, that great peer and pillar of France, at his death, did in this respect very ill offices of ghostly fathers unto him in his greatest need and last extremity. For when he behaved himself more like a furious devil already amongst the damned spirits in blasphemies, impatiencies, and most raging passions, than a meek and humble saint of God, ready to pass into everlasting mansions of peace, they notwithstanding, out of their popish divinity, gave him "this absolution, assuring him that his soul was ready to see God, and to be partaker of his glory in heaven;" when it had been far fitter to have driven him to the sight of his sins, sense of that dreadful hour, terror of that strict tribunal to

which he was ready to pass, and fearfulness of that infernal fiery lake from which no greatness can privilege graceless men. I fear there are many time-serving ministers of the true religion also, who are ready to do proportionable service to ungodly great ones upon whom they depend, by promising them life. But many and dreadful are the mistakings and miseries which fall upon the souls of men, both patients and by-standers, by these flattering formal visitations and funeral panegyrics which ordinarily follow after. Happy then, and hopeful is that man, who in the troubles of his soul meets with that "one of a thousand" (Job xxxiii, 23), with those sons both of consolation and thunder, who are as able, ready, and willing rightly to bind up a bruised spirit with the balm of mercy and promises of life, as to break in pieces a stubborn heart with the terrors of the law: who, as they labour in the first place to frighten men out of their sinful courses into penitent dejections of conscience, a needful preparative to a saving conversion, so they have learned both speculatively and experimentally to conduct them through the pangs of the new birth to sound comfort in Christ, mortification, new obedience, walking with God, &c.

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### CHAP. XVIII.

Three Cases more, wherein the pangs of Conscience are not healed.

4. OTHERS there are who pass out of trouble of conscience for sin into some more tolerable courses for the time to come; but yet not thoroughly and savingly into the truth and pursuit of Christianity. For when Satan once perceives that sorrow for sin lies so heavy upon a man's heart, and the rage of guiltiness doth sting him still with such restless anguish, that in all likelihood it will at length draw and drive him to some alteration at least, and work out at last some measure of amendment, then doth he, out of an insatiable hellish thirst to hold him still in his clutches, bend and employ all his power and policy to make him satisfy himself, and rest finally, as sufficiently fitted for salvation, in some partial, insufficient, half conversion; and to sit down contentedly with religious forms only, and some outward reformation. The devil's first desire in working our destruction is to keep a man who is notoriously naught in the highest strain of impiety; a traitor in grain,

as it were, and most desperate rebel to the Divine Majesty, wallowing still in all variety of villany and vanity. But if that will not be, he is glad to detain him in what degree of profaneness he can most conveniently and with greatest safety, though the least and the lowest; in any state of unregenerateness, though furnished with the utmost perfection of which it is capable, so that he step not into the kingdom of Christ. Rather than he will utterly lose him and part with him quite, he will leave possession of him in part, and be willing, though full sore against his will, to lose a great deal of his former more furious service, and something of the fulness of his conformity to the fashions of hell. If he cannot do as he would, he will do as he may. When he sees him grumbling, and grow discontent and weary with the loathsomeness of the dungeon and weight of his fetters, rather than he should escape and break quite away, he will knock off some of his irons, grant him the liberty of the prison, the comfort of the walks; nay, and suffer him sometimes to walk abroad, so that he be still watchfully attended by his keeper, and continue a retainer to the kingdom of darkness. He will be content to give him the benefit of the fewest stripes in hell, and the least measure of damnation, though that also be more than infinitely terrible and intolerable, rather than he should not be damned at all. And therefore in such a case he will easily suffer him to proceed to some kind of repentance, and reformation of some one or more outward gross notorious sins, remorse whereof, perhaps, did first raise the terror and trouble in his mind, so that he will there rest and remain unmortified and unamended in the rest. Or, he cares not much though he be universally outwardly reformed, and unblameable for the most part in his visible carriage and conversation, though he restore ill-gotten goods, say his prayers, give alms, fast often, give tithes of all that he possesses with the pharisee, hold out a lamp of goodly profession to the eye of the world with the foolish virgins, observe godly ministers, reform many things after their preaching, and hear them gladly, with Herod; so that for all this plausible and unpernicious outside the heart continue unchaste, impure, unholy, unheavenly still; and he still hug in his bosom some secret lusts and sensual corruptions with willing delight and loathness to leave them. Or, if a man, besides outward religious representations and conformities, desires also to find and feel in himself some kind of inward work, he will not be much troubled with addition of the spirit of illumination, temporary faith, some "joy in the word" (Matt. xiii, 20), "taste of the powers

of the world to come," &c. (Heb. vi, 5); so that the spirit of special sanctification be wanting still, and that some darling delight be maintained in heart, life, or calling; which the man by no means would have meddled with or mortified. On that (which is a notable depth of the devil, of which take special notice), whereas a man hears many times out of the ministry of the word, that the abandoning of his bosom sin is a good token of a true conversion, and the embracing of it still is too sure a sign that he is Satan's still; to the end he may blind him in this important point, he will suffer him to exchange the visible form and outward exercise even of his beloved sin. For example: a man's captain and commanding sin is covetousness, and it is outwardly exercised in usury, bribery, sacrilege, &c. He is well enough content in this case to let him be frighted by the terror of the ministry from those grosser acts of cruelty for which the world cries shame on him (especially not restoring), so that he insensibly fall into and secretly practise some other cunning invisible oppressions, or any unlawful ways of getting. His sweet sin is voluptuousness; he hunts after it in the horrible villanies of adultery or fornication; but at some sermon or other, he is told and terrified, that by such sins he doth not only damn himself, but also even draw another to hell with him; whereupon he may grow into a slavish distaste and discontinuance from them, and Satan will not say much, so that there succeed in their rooms some other kinds of sins of the same class. Nay, he will yet yield further, and endure an utter cessation from the external acts and visible practice of a man's predominant and reigning sin, so that he delightfully feed upon it still in his heart with speculative greediness, and spend the strength of his affections and the most of his thoughts that way. He will give him leave to leave off his usury, and to call in his money (but ordinarily ever without restitution), so that he may hold his heart still "exercised with covetousness." He can well enough abide abandoning the gross acts of uncleanness; so that he lie frying in the flames of his own scorching concupiscence, and consume his thoughts in the adulteries of the heart and contemplative filth. O the endless mazes, unfathomed depths, and deepest malice of that old red dragon! He will yield unto any thing, rake in the very darkest nook of hell for some cunning device, rather than part with a precious soul out of his hellish paw. If a man be so haunted with horror of conscience that he dare not for his life lie any longer in notoriousness, but will needs get into some new course, he can put him into many new fashions, and yet no new birth,

no new man. He will suffer him to pass into a more tolerable conversation, and yet come short of a true conversion; he can afford him a moral change, or a formal change, or a mental change (I mean it only in respect of the spirit of illumination and general graces), or a temporary change (of which see my "Directions for Walking with God"), and yet continue him still within the confines of his cursed kingdom, and in a damnable state. He doth improve to the utmost, as occasion of advantage is offered, both the grisliest shape of a foul fiend, and the most alluring light of his angelical glory, to do us a mischief any way, either upon the right hand or the left. How many thousands, (ah, pity!) even in this clearest noon-tide of the Gospel doth he keep in a presumptuous confidence, that they are converted; and yet most certainly his own still, and in a willing slavery to some one or other predominant lust at the least! Be advised, then, in the name of Christ, whosoever thou art, when the hand of God in great mercy shall visit and vex thy conscience for sin by the piercing power of the ministry, be sure to follow the direction and guidance of that blessed hand, without daubing or diversion, out of the kingdom of darkness, through the pangs of the new birth into the holy path, wholly and for ever. Make sure work, whatsoever it cost thee; go thorough-stitch, though thou lose a right hand or right eye by it; "sell all that thou hast;" the pearl is of great price; have never any thing more to do with the devil; give over the trade of sinning entirely; never more to "turn again unto folly" upon any terms. And if Satan set upon thee with baits and allurements to detain thee in his spiritual bondage but by one darling delight to which thou hast been most addicted, answer him in this case with unshaken resolution, as Moses did Pharaoh in a point of temporal bondage, "There shall not so much as a hoof be left behind;" yield not a hair's breadth upon any condition to that hellish Pharaoh; especially in so great a matter as the endless salvation or damnation of thy soul. If he can keep possession but by one reigning sin, in which thou liest with delight against the light of thy conscience, hating to be reformed, he desires no more. One knot in a thread will stay the needle's passage as well as five hundred. See to this purpose my Directions of Walking with God. Beware then of closing up the wound of thy terrified and troubled conscience with any outside, half, or unsound conversion; which I make the fourth passage out of trouble of mind for sin.

5. And why may not Satan sometimes by God's permis-

sion be suffered to inflict and fasten his fiery darts of terrors and temptations upon a man's conscience, continue them there some while with much anguish and horror for some secret holy end, seen and seeming good to Divine wisdom, and at length remove and withdraw them, not upon succession of any sound comfort or true peace from the promises of life and pardon of sin; but only upon a mere cessation of the devil's pleasure to torment and terrify any longer? Not that he can hurt the least or most contemptible creature that ever God made when he pleases; but that it pleaseth God sometimes to give him the reins and leave to rage. Quieting the conscience in this case is no comfortable cure from positive help; but a counterfeit palliation by ceasing to hurt.

6. Nay, let me here further, before I pass out of the point, discover unto you a mystery; but it is of iniquity and horrible hypocrisy. I have known some (would you think it?) who have counterfeited even trouble of conscience; and made show without all truth or true touch of sundry temptations and spiritual distempers incident only to the saints. And have for that purpose addressed themselves with much industry and noise, and had recourse many times to some spiritual physicians, with many tears, a heavy countenance, and other rueful circumstances, expressing almost exactly the scruples, doubts, distrusts, complaints, of such as are truly grieved in spirit and true of heart. O the wonderful depth which lieth hid in the confluence of the hypocrisies of man's false heart; and the devices of "that old serpent, which deceiveth the whole world!" (Revel. xii, 9.) Such as these take upon them and lay aside terrors of conscience, as players do their apparel and parts.

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## SECT. II, PART II.

### CHAP. I.

The right method of curing an Afflicted Conscience. Four things required in the right method of curing.

THE passages past do all mislead into bye-paths; but there is one blessed way, besides all these, though it be a narrow one, which conducts directly out of a natural state through the pangs of the new birth without diversion or daubing; without any longer detainment in any lust, sensual plea-

sure, or beloved vanity ; in any kind of hypocrisy, or degree of unregeneration, into the paradise of grace fully and for ever. This neither plunges a man into the pit of despair, nor misguides him by carnal counsel and his own wicked conceit into the fool's paradise, and tasteless fooleries of outward mirth ; nor pacifies unseasonably with untimely and counterfeit peace ; nor leaves in the deceiving forms of an unsound conversion, and unsaving flourishes of general graces only, &c. ; but conveys and transports him happily by an universal, sincere, supernatural, thorough change, into the "holy path ;" and that thus, and by such degrees as these :—

1. The first is an illumination of the mind, conviction of the conscience, terrifying the heart with sight, sense, and horror of sin in some true measure. The first work of the Spirit is to "convince of sin" (John xvi, 8), which presupposeth illumination and produceth terror. The Spirit of bondage must be first set on work to show us our spiritual misery, to humble us to prepare for Christ. And yet this work in itself is common to the alien with the child of the new birth ; and ordinarily here they part. The alien, and he that hates to be reformed, out of an inveterate, unhappy prejudice against the saving preciseness of the saints and loathness to leave utterly his former courses, company, conversation ; being obstinately against passing on forward into the way which is called holy (regeneration, the new birth, repentance, mortification, sanctification, self-denial, new obedience, walking with God, turning Puritan, &c., are terms perhaps of as great terror unto him as his present trouble of conscience), doth now here divert, and afterward wilfully and wofully perish in some pestilent or plausible bye-path. In this case he labours and lays about him for ease any way (yea, sometimes he will have it from the devil himself, if he can, rather than miss of it) so that he may attain and keep it without any great alteration of his former ways, or especially without parting with his darling pleasure. And therefore he assays either to conquer his spiritual affliction with worldly comforts, carnal counsel, choice contentments, &c., or else to allay the present storm of his guilty rage with some counterfeit calm ; or at best to still the cry of his conscience, with putting forth his hand to some outward works of Christianity, and some kind of conversion, which may yet well enough consist with the secret enjoyment of his bosom sin ; or by some other such indirect course and unsound cure. But now the other, whom the Lord doth purpose to prepare for himself by this first work, and to call effectually, doth en-

tain at the same time by the help of God a strong, invincible resolution, not only never more to return unto foolishness, whatsoever comes of him, never upon any terms to fall back again into his former sinful pleasures, which have now fastened so many fiery scorpion's stings in his conscience; but also never to admit of any cure, recovery, and comfort to his afflicted soul but only by Jesus Christ. Never to have the bleeding wounds of his bruised spirit bathed, bound up, and healed, but in that "fountain, opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." Nay, rather than he will do the one or the other, he will abide upon the rack of his spiritual torture unto his ending hour. Whereupon he directly addresseth and applies himself to the only means appointed and sanctified by God for working a sure, kindly, and lasting cure in such a case; I mean, the ministry of the word. And if he may have his will, he would hit upon the most skilful, experienced, searching, and sound-dealing man, amongst all God's faithful messengers.

2. And so in a second place, without all reservation or any purpose ever to return or divert, he comes unto the ministers of God in the same mind and with the same meaning that Peter's hearers did, having his heart pricked and rent in pieces with legal terror, as theirs were: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts ii, 37.) If there be any instruction, direction, or duty, which upon good ground out of God's blessed book you can enjoin, we will willingly follow it, embrace it, and rather die than not do it. Prescribe any course whereby we may have the boiling rage of our guilty consciences somewhat assuaged, and we will bless God that ever we saw your faces; nay, that ever he made you the happy instruments to fasten these keen arrows of truth and terror in our amazed and afflicted spirits. And now here the ministers of God have a strong and seasonable calling to set forth in the highest degree the excellency, amiableness, and soul-saving sufficiency of Jesus Christ, blessed for ever; to amplify and magnify to the life the heavenly beauty, invaluableness, and sweetness of his person, passion, promises. No sin of so deep a dye, be it scarlet or crimson, but his precious blood can raze it out. No heart so dark or heavy, but one beam shining from his pleased face can fill it as full of spiritual glory and joy as the sun is of light, or the sea of waters. No man so miserable, but if he will go out of himself and the devil's slavery quite, and come in, when he is dearly invited, he will advance him "without money, and without price," from depth of horror to height of happiness.

3. By this time, being thus told and truly informed in the mystery and mercy of the gospel, the poor wounded and weary soul begins to be deeply and dearly enamoured of Jesus Christ. To advance him highest in his thoughts, as the only jewel and joy of his heart, without which he hath been heretofore a dead man, and shall hereafter be sunk in endless perdition; to prefer and prize him far above the pleasures, riches, and glory of the whole earth; to set his eye and longing so upon him, as to hold himself lost for ever without his love. Nay, in the case in which he now stands, he is most willing for a sound and saving cure to pass through a piece of hell, if need were, to such a heavenly physician, in whose blessed person alone, as he hears, all the riches of mercy, goodness, compassion, and comfort are to be found, and in whom are hid and heaped up the fulness of grace and treasures of all perfection. So that now the current of his best affections, and all the powers of his humbled soul are wholly bent and directed towards him, as the sunflower towards the sun, the iron to the loadstone, and the loadstone to the pole star: to whom the nearer he draws, the more heartily it grieves him that ever he pierced so sweet and dear a Saviour with such a former impure, loathsome life, and so many abominable and now most abhorred provocations.

4. Upon this discovery, survey, and admiration of this "pearl of great price," this rich treasure, the now truly broken and contrite heart doth cast about by all means how to compass it. Oh! what would he now give for the sweet fruition and ravishing possession of it! Heart's blood, life, lying in hell for a season, were nothing in this case. The imperial crowns and command of ten thousand worlds, could they be all enjoyed at once, would be in his thoughts but as dust in the balance laid in the scale against Jesus Christ. But these things are not required at his hands. At last he happily hits upon that which God would have him; he even resolves to "sell all that he hath," to part with all sin, though it should be as dear and as much doated upon as that compared to a right eye or right hand; be it that which hath kept him longest in hell, most wasted the conscience, and stuck closest to his bosom; I mean his captain corruption, master lust, or dearest delight, he will spare none, he will quite depart from Sodom, he will not leave so much as a hoof behind. For he well now remembers what he hath often heard heretofore, though then he took no heed, that the Lord Jesus and any one allowed lust are never wont to lodge together in the same soul.

## CHAP. II.

Three Things more required in those who are rightly cured.

5. To the party thus legally afflicted, evangelically affected, and fitted savingly, now do all the promises of life in God's blessed book offer themselves as so many rocks of eternity in "faithfulness and truth;" for his wearied soul, tossed with tempest, and sorely bruised with storms of terror, sweetly to rest upon with everlasting safety. God the Father, his bowels of tenderest compassion and bounty already stirring within him, runs, if I may so say, as the father in the gospel, to fall upon its neck and to kiss it with the kisses of his sweetest mercy. Jesus Christ opens himself, as it were, upon the cross to receive it graciously into his bleeding wounds; all which, he beholding with a spiritually enlightened eye, admiring and adoring, cannot choose but subscribe and seal unto them that they are true, and so by the help of the Holy Ghost casts himself with all the spiritual strength he can, at least with infinite longings, most thirsty desires, and resolution never to part, into his blessed bosom, saying secretly to himself, Come life, come death, come heaven, come hell, come what may, here will I stick for ever: and if ever I perish, they shall pluck me out of the hands, and rend me from between the arms of this mighty, glorious, and dearest Redeemer of mine.

6. And having now taken Christ as a Saviour, to free him from the miseries of sin, he is willing also to take him as a Lord, husband, and king, to serve, love, and obey him. For every one that is truly Christ's, doth as well thirst heartily and sincerely endeavour after mortification, conquest over corruptions, sanctification, purity, new obedience, ability to do or suffer any thing for Christ, as for pardon of sin and salvation from hell: and therefore he willingly "takes upon him his yoke," which though so called, is "easy and light;" enters in earnest into the "narrow way," which though it be "everywhere spoken against," as it was in Paul's time (Acts xxviii, 22), yet in truth and upon trial is most precious, profitable, and pleasant. See Prov. iii, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom," to wit, in the word, to walk in the ways of God. "She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." He now, for the short remainder of his abode in the vale of tears, vows and

gives up the flower and prime of all his abilities, loves, joys, endeavours, performances of every kind, to the Highest Majesty ; and consecrates all the powers and possibilities of body and soul to do him the best and utmost service he can any way devise, until his dying day, and still grieves and walks more humbly because he can do no better. For when he casts his eyes upon God the Father's free love, and Christ's dear passion, he thinks with himself (and so he well may), that if he were able to do him as much service as all the saints do, both in this and the church above, with addition of all the angelical obedience, it were all infinitely less than nothing towards the discharge of his debt and incomprehensible everlasting obligation.

7. And being thus incorporated into Christ, he presently associates himself to the brotherhood, to the "sect that is everywhere spoken against:" for so is profession accounted (Acts xxviii, 22). After that Peter's hearers "were pricked in their hearts," they were counselled to repent, believe, be baptized, &c. and to "save themselves from that untoward generation" (Acts ii, 40). He now begins to delight himself in them whom he heartily hated before; I mean, the people of God, professors of the truth and power of religion, and that as the most "excellent of the earth," the only true noble worthies of the world, worthy for ever of the flower, fervency, and dearness of his most melting affections and intimate love. And he labours also might and main to ingratiate himself into their blessed communion, by ail engagements and obligations of a comfortable, fruitful, and constant "fellowship in the gospel;" by a humble mutual intercourse and communication of holy conference, heavenly counsel, spiritual encouragements, consideration one of another, confirmation in grace, and in assurance of meeting in heaven; resolved to live and die with these neglected happy ones, in all fair and faithful correspondence, sweetest offices of Christianity, and constant cleaving to the Lord Jesus and his glorious cause; nay, assured to reign with them hereafter everlastingly in fulness and height of all glory, joy, and bliss; for if once this divine flame of brotherly love be kindled by the Holy Ghost in the hearts of true-hearted Christians one towards another, it hath this property and privilege above all other loves, that it is never after put out or quenched, but burns in their breasts with much affectionate fervour, with mutual warmth of dearest sweetness here upon earth, and shall blaze eternally with seraphical heat in the highest heavens hereafter. In the mean time, he makes conscience of sympathizing both with their felicities and miseries. His heart is enlarged with lightsomeness,

or eclipsed with grief, as he hears of the prosperity or oppression of God's people. I the rather here mention this mark of the true convert, because it is so much required, nay infinitely exacted at our hands in these heavy times of the church; and therefore may be to every one of us an evident touchstone to try whether our profession be vital or formal. If those terrors which I have heretofore many times threatened out of God's book against all those pitiless and hard-hearted cannibals who take not the present troubles of the church to heart, on purpose to break in pieces those flinty rocks which dwell in some men's breasts, and to drive us all to compassionateness, prayer, days of humiliation, and parting from our evil ways; I say, if they have been thought by any to have been pressed too precisely and peremptorily, hear what I have since seen in Austin, and what a peremptory censure he doth pass upon those who want a fellow-feeling in such a case: "If thou hast this fellow-feeling, thou art of that blessed body and brotherhood; if not, thou art not." And here can I hardly forbear crying out with "a voice lifted up like a trumpet," against all those profane Esaus, swinish Gadarenes, senseless earth-worms, who all this while that so many noble limbs of that great blessed body of the reformed churches have lain in tears and blood, did never take to heart to any purpose, or trouble themselves at all with their grievous troubles; but have sottishly and securely lain "at ease in Zion," liable to that horrible curse denounced against Meroz:—"Curse ye Meroz (said the angel of the Lord), curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty" (Judg. v, 23). They have not helped the people of God so much as with any hearty fellow-feeling, wrestling with God in prayer, set days to seek the return of God's face and favour. Men they are of the world, which have their portion in this life; who feel nothing but worldly losses, know nothing but earthly sorrows, relish nothing but things of sense. If they be stung with a dear year, rot of cattle, loss by suretyship, shipwreck, robbery, fire, &c. they howl and lament immoderately. But let "Joseph be afflicted," God's people in disgrace, the ministry hazarded, Christ's spouse "sit in the dust," the "daughter of Zion" weep bitterly and have none to comfort her, and these merciless men are no whit moved. They have not a tear, a groan, or sigh to spend in such a rueful case; whereby they infallibly demonstrate to their own consciences, that they are no living members of Christ's mystical body, have no part of the holy fellowship of the saints, no spark of spiritual life, no acquaintance at

all with the ways of God ; but continue cursedly careless what becomes of the gospel, or God's children, so that they may rise, grow rich, and sleep in a whole skin.

By this time he is become the drunkard's song, table-talk to those that "sit in the gate," music to great men at their feasts, a bye-word to the children of fools and the children of villains, men viler than the earth, whose fathers he would have disdained to have set with the dogs of his flock. And what then? Even thus they dealt with David, Job, and Jeremiah (Psal. lxxix, Job xxx, Lam. iii, 63). Nay, they told the Son of God himself, in whom the Godhead dwelt bodily, that he was "a Samaritan, and had a devil" (John viii, 48). What thinking man, then, that gives his name to Christ and looks to be saved, will look for exemption? Especially since all the contumelies and contempts, all those nicknames of puritan, precisian, hypocrite, humourist, factionist, with which lewd tongues are wont to load the saints of God, are so many honourable badges of their worthy deportment in the holy path, and resolute standing on the Lord's side. Some noble Romans having done some singular service to the state, being afterwards troubled and handled violently in some private cases, were wont to bare their bodies, and to show in open court the scars and impressions of those wounds which they had received in their country's cause, as characters of special honour and strongest motives to commiseration. So many lying imputations, unworthy usages, and persecutions in any kind for profession of godliness, which the faithful Christian shall bring to the judgment-seat of Christ, so many glorious and royal representations of excellency of spirit and height of courage in the Christian cause shall they be accounted in the sight and judgment of Almighty God and the blessed angels, and make him more amiable and admirable in the face of heaven and earth.

## SECT. III, PART I.

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### CHAP. I.

Three Principles of Comfort from without us, to be applied to Afflicted Consciences.

THUS much of the theory, I come now to the practical part, to a particular application of some special sovereign antidotes to the most grievous ordinary maladies incident to the souls of the saints.

But first give me leave to premise some general well-heads, out of which do spring abundance of comfort, and overflowing rivers of refreshing for all intents and effects in point of temptation and trouble of mind.

And first take a fruitful cluster and heavenly heap of them together; those twelve heads of extraordinary, immeasurable, comfortable matter for spiritual medicines, which I have heretofore erected as so many invincible bulwarks against all assaults of despair, oppositions of Satan, exceptions of distrust.

1. The infiniteness of God's mercy, sweetly intimated in Isa. lv, 6, 7, 8. The mercy of God is like himself, infinite. All our sins are finite, both in number and nature. Now between finite and infinite there is no proportion, and so no possibility of resistance. And therefore be thy sins never so notorious and numberless, yet a truly broken heart, thirsting for and throwing itself upon Christ, unfeignedly resolving upon new obedience and his glorious service for the time to come, can no more withstand or stand before God's mercies, than a little spark can withstand the boundless and mighty ocean, thrown into the midst of it; nay, infinitely less. If all the sins that all the sons and daughters of Adam have committed since the creation to this time were all upon one soul, yet so affected as I have said, and put into such a new penitent gracious temper, it should be most certainly upon good ground and everlastingly safe. I speak not thus to make any secure; for any one sin, pleasing

and reigning, will ruin a soul for ever; but to assure of mercy enough, how great or many soever the sins have been, if the heart be now truly humbled for them all, and wholly turned heavenward.

2. The invaluable-ness of Christ's meritorious blood, which is called "the blood of God," and therefore of inestimable price. Understand me aright: it was "the blood of God;" not of the Godhead, but of him who was both God and man. For the manhood of Christ was received into the union of the Second Person, and so it may be called "the blood of God," for so speaks St. Paul (Acts xx, 28), "God purchased his church with his own blood;" that is, Christ, God incarnate. Our divines express it thus: "It was the Son of God and Lord of life that died for us upon the cross; but it was the nature of man, not of God, wherein he died; and it was the nature of God, and infinite excellency of the same, whence the price, value, and worth of his passion grew." This blessed blood then is of infinite efficacy; and therefore, if thou be now turning to the Lord, assure thyself, whatsoever thy sins have been, they have not outgone the price that hath been paid for them. This blood, upon repentance, did take off the transcendant scarlet guilt from the souls even of those that shed it. (Acts ii, &c.)

3. The riches of the word, in affording precedents of the saints, and of the Son of God himself, who have surpassed thee, and that perhaps very far, in any kind of misery thou canst name.

(1.) Thou art perhaps consulting with the prodigal to come in, but there comes terribly into thy mind the extraordinary heinousness of thy former sins, and that hinders. Cast thine eye then upon Manasseh, a man of prodigious impiety and matchless villany. He "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. He caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom. Also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards. He wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger," &c. (2 Kings xxi, 16; 2 Chron. xxxiii, 2—6.) And yet this great sinner, "humbling himself greatly before the God of his fathers," was received to mercy (ver. 12, 13).

(2.) Suppose (which yet were a horrible thing) that after conversion, by extraordinary violence of temptation, strong ensnarement of some sudden sensual offer and opportunity,

treacherous insinuation of thy own false heart, and furious reassault of thy former bosom sin, thou shouldst be overtaken grossly with some grievous sin and scandalous fall, and then upon illumination, remorse, and meditation of return, reason thus within thyself:—"Alas! what shall I do now? I have undone all. I have wofully again defiled my soul, so fairly washed in my Saviour's blood, with that disavowed sin of my unregenerate time. I have shamed my profession, disgraced religion for ever; I have broke my vows, lost my peace, and my wonted blessed communion with God: and therefore what hope can I have of any acceptance again at the throne of grace?"—I say in this case, to keep thee from sinking, cast thine eye upon Aaron, David, Peter, who, returning with sound and hearty repentance, were mercifully received into as great favour as they were before. But God forbid that any professor of religion should ever fall so foully, especially in this glorious mid-day of evangelical light.

(3.) Art thou languishing under the heavy desolations of a spiritual desertion, and deprived of thy former comfortable feelings of God's favourable countenance? Look upon David: "I remembered God, and was troubled. I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. I am so troubled that I cannot speak. My soul refused to be comforted" (Psalm lxxvii). Nay, upon Jesus Christ himself, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii, 46.)

(4.) Art thou haunted with some of Satan's most hateful and horrible injections, grisly to the eye even of corrupted nature; thoughts framed by himself immediately and put into thee, perhaps tending to atheism, or to the dishonour of God in the highest degree, or of his blessed word; to self-destruction, or the like?—thoughts which thou canst not remember without horror, and darest not reveal or name for their strange and prodigious monstrousness? If it be thus with thee, consider how this malicious fiend dealt with the Son of God himself. He offered to his most holy and unspotted imagination these propositions: First, murder and make away with thyself (Matt. iv, 6). Secondly, fall down and worship the devil (ver. 9); than which, a fouler thought I think was never injected; that Jesus Christ, blessed for ever, in whom the Godhead dwelt bodily, should fall down and worship the devil, the vilest of creatures. And yet this was suggested to our blessed Saviour; to which his purest heart, infinitely incapable of sin, was as a brass wall to an arrow, beating it back presently with infinite contempt, and himself did utterly conquer and confound

the tempter, and that for thee and thy sake too. And therefore if thy humbled soul do abominate and abandon them from the heart-root to the pit of hell, they shall never be laid to thy charge, but set on Satan's score. Extremely then do those wrong themselves, and gratify the devil to the height, who suffer such injections, which they heartily hate and stand against with all their strength, to hold their hearts still upon the rack of extraordinary astonishment and distraction, whereby they are unnecessarily discouraged and disabled for a cheerful discharge of both their callings, which is the thing Satan especially aims at in vexing so many of God's dearest servants with this most fiery dart.

(5.) It may be that many years after thy new birth, when thou thinkest the worst is past, thou mayest be revisited and afflicted afresh with perhaps sorer spiritual pangs and more horror than at the first. And what then? Hear how David, a man after God's own heart, cries out: "My bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drouth of summer" (Psal. xxxiii, 3, 4). And Job, a God-fearing man and most upright: "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro; and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me" (Job xiii, 24, 25, 26; vi, 4). Hezekiah, that walked before God in truth and with a perfect heart: "I reckoned till morning, that as a lion so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove. Mine eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me" (Isa. xxxviii, 13, 14).

(6.) Dost thou day after day pour out thy soul in prayer before the throne of grace with all the earnestness thy poor, dead heart (as thou callest it) can possibly; and dost thou still rise up dull, heavy-hearted, and uncomfortable, without any sensible answer from God, or comfortable sense of his favour and love shed into thy heart? Be it so: yet for all this, pray still in obedience unto thy God against all discouragements and oppositions whatsoever. Still press hard unto and ply God's mercy-seat, if it be but with sighs and groanings. Assuredly at length and in the fittest time thou shalt be gloriously refreshed, and registered in the remembrance of God for a Christian of excellent faith. See

a pattern of rare and extraordinary patience this way in Matt. xv, 23. There that woman of Canaan, having received many grievous repulses and cutting discouragements; — the solicited was silent — the disciples grumble — she was not of the fold — she was a dog; — yet for all this, by her constancy in crying after Christ, her petition at last was not only granted, but herself also crowned with a singular and admirable eulogy from the Lord's own mouth: "O woman! great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." What an honour and comfort was this, to be thus commended by Jesus Christ! — and that with an admiration, "O woman!"

(7.) Hath thy faith lost its feeling? Dost thou for the present feel nothing but "anger, wrath, and great indignation?" Is God's face and favour, wherein is life, turned away from thee, and quite hid from thy sight? Nay, "hath he broken thee asunder, taken thee by the neck, and shaken thee to pieces, and set thee up for his mark?" Yet for all this, let thy truly humbled soul be so far from loosing or leaving its holdfast and sure repose upon the person, passion, and promises of Jesus Christ, that in such a case it cleave and cling faster to that blessed rock, and far more immovably. For therein especially is the strength and glory of faith improved and made illustrious. It is one of the most noble and heroical acts of faith to believe without feeling. "He who believeth most and feeleth least, is he who glorifieth God most. It is nothing to swim in a warm bath: but to endure the surges and tumbling billows of the sea — that is the man." To believe when God doth fairly and sensibly shine upon the soul with the love and light of his countenance, is no great matter; but to rest invincibly upon his mercy through Christ, when he grinds thee to powder, that is the faith. Thou hast before thee for this purpose a matchless precedent. Thus cries holy Job, vexed not only with an unparalleled variety and extremity of outward afflictions, but also with the venom of the Almighty's arrows, drinking up his spirit — "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Chap. xiii, 15). So Abraham, Rom. iv, 18.

(8.) Hast thou given thy name stoutly to religion, and dost thou stand on God's side with resolution? And art thou therefore villanously traduced with slanderous, odious nicknames of puritan, precisian, hypocrite, humourist, dissembler, &c.? Consider then for thy comfort, that graceless wretches, when he was upon earth, called thy blessed Lord and Saviour devil (Matt. x, 25; John vi, 20), which passeth all, I am persuaded, that any drunken Belial ever

fastened upon thee. Contemn thou therefore for ever, and trample upon with a humble and triumphant patience, all their contumelies and contempts. Pass by nobly, without touch or trouble, without wound or passion, the utmost malice of the most scurrilous tongues, the basest taunts of the most impure drunkard.

(9.) Doth the world, carnal men, thine own friends, formal teachers, suppose and declare thee to be a dissembler in thy profession, and will needs concurrently and confidently, yet falsely, fasten upon thee the imputation of hypocrisy? A heavy charge! Yet for all this, let thy truly-humbled heart, conscious to itself of its own sincerity in holy services, like a strong pillar of brass, beat back all their poisoned arrows of malice and mistake, without any dejection or discouragement; only take occasion hereby to search more thoroughly, and walk more warily. Job may be a right noble pattern to thee in this point also. He had against him not only the devil, his enemy, pushing at him with his poisoned weapons; but even his own friends scourging him with their tongues; his own wife a thorn pricking him in the eye: yea, his own God "running upon him like a giant, and his terrors setting themselves in array against him;" powerful motives to make him suspect himself of former halting and hollow-heartedness in the ways of God; yet notwithstanding his good and honest heart having been long before acquainted with, and knit unto his God in truth, makes him break out boldly, and resolutely protest — "Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go. Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high" (Job xxvii, 5, 6; xvi, 19).

(10.) Art thou a loving and tender-hearted mother unto thy children, and hast thou lost the dearest? The greatest outward cross, I confess, that ever the sons and daughters of Adam tasted, and goeth nearest to the heart. Yet thy sorrow is not singular, but outgone in this also: for the blessed mother of Christ stood by, and saw her own only, dear, innocent Son, the Lord of life, most cruelly and villanously murdered upon the cross before her eyes (John xix, 25). Hast thou lost thy goods or children? Doth thy wife that lies in thy bosom set herself against thee? Do thy nearest friends charge thee falsely? Art thou pained extremely from top to toe? Do the arrows of the Almighty stick fast in thy soul? Thy affliction is grievous enough, if thou taste any of these severally; but do they all in greatest extremity concur upon thee at once? Hast thou lost all thy children

and all thy goods? Doth thy wife afflict thy afflictions? If this be not thy case and rueful condition, thou comest yet short of Job, a most just man, and one of God's dearest jewels.

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## CHAP. II.

Two Principles of Comfort more.

4. THE "exceeding greatness and preciousness of the promises." In every one of which it is incredible to consider what abundant matter of unspeakable and glorious joy lies wrapt up! Oh! how sweet are they to a thirsty soul in the time of anguish and trouble! They are like a cloud of rain that cometh in the time of a drought. They are very glimpses of heaven shed into the heart, many times as dark as hell. They are even rocks of eternity, upon which every bruised reed may sweetly repose with impregnable safety. A truly humbled spirit, relishing spiritual things, would not exchange any one of them for all the riches and sweetness of both the Indies. Tell me, dear heart, thou that in thy unregenerate time, though now happily changed, lay soaking in sins of cruelty and blood; whether that merciful promise, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool" (Isa. i, 18); be not far dearer unto thee "than thousands of gold and silver?" Or thou, who formerly pollutedst thyself villanously with such secret execrable lusts, which now thou canst not remember without horror, tell me, if it were utterable by the tongue of man, with what dearest sweetness and blessed peace thy broken heart was bound up and revived, when thou didst cast thine eye considerately and believingly upon that precious place, "I will sprinkle water upon you, and ye shall be clean; and from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you" (Ezek. xxxvi, 25).

"There was beyond the seas, as my Author reports\*, a Christian matron of excellent parts and piety, who languishing long under the horrible pressure of most furious and fiery temptations, wofully at length yielded to despair, and attempted the destruction of herself. After often and curious seeking occasion for the fulfilment of her design, at last, having first put off her apparel, she threw herself headlong from a high promontory into the sea. But having re-

\* Alexipharm. adversus desperationem; Authore M. Nicolao Laurentio, p. 63 et seq.

ceived no hurt by the fall, she was there by a most extraordinary mercy strangely preserved for the space of two hours at the least, though all the while she laboured industriously to destroy herself. Afterwards drawn out with much ado, and recovered, she yet did conflict with that extremest desperate horror almost a whole year; but by God's good providence, which sweetly and wisely ordereth all things, listening on a time, though very unwillingly at first, to her husband, reading amongst other places Isa. lvii, 15, 16, 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made;'—I say, listening to these words, the Holy Ghost drawing her heart, she began to reason thus with herself: God doth here promise to revive and comfort the heart of the contrite and spirit of the humble, and that he will not contend for ever, neither be always wroth. But I have a very contrite heart, and a spirit humbled even unto the dust, out of the acknowledgment and sense of my sins and divine vengeance against them; therefore, peradventure, God will vouchsafe to revive and comfort my heart and spirit; and not contend with me for ever, nor be wroth against me still.

"Hereupon by little and little there flowed by God's blessing into her dark and heavy heart abundance of life, lightsomeness, spiritual strength, and assurance. In which she continued with constancy and comfort many a year after, crowned those happy days and a blessed old age with a glorious and triumphant death, and went to heaven in the year 1595."

What heart now but hers that felt it can possibly conceive the depth of that extraordinary unutterable refreshing, which sprung out of that promise upon her forlorn and fearful soul; or the excess of that love which she bore ever after to those blessed lines, to the mercy that made them, and to the blood that sealed them?

"Another, terrified in conscience for sin, resolves to turn on God's side; but the cry of his good-fellow companions, strength of corruption, and cunning of Satan, carry him back to his former courses. A good number of years after he was so thoroughly wounded, that whatsoever came of him he would never return again unto folly. Then comes into his mind the first of the Proverbs, whence he reasoned against himself:—So many years ago God called and

stretched out his hand in mercy, but I refused; and therefore now, though I call upon him he will not answer; though I seek him early I shall not find him. Whereupon was his heart filled with much grief, terror, and slavish fear. But the Spirit of God leading him at length to that place, Luke xvii, 4, 'If thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.' He thence happily argued thus for himself:—Must I, a silly, sinful man, forgive my brother as often as he repents; and will not then the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort entertain me, seeking again in truth his face and favour? God forbid. From which he blessedly drew such divine sweetness and secret sense of God's love, that his trembling heart at first received some good satisfaction, and afterward was settled in a sure and glorious peace.

"Another godly man passing through his last sickness with such extraordinary calmness of conscience, and absolute freedom from temptation, that some of his Christian friends observing and admiring the singularity of his soul's quiet, at that time especially, questioned him about it:—he answered, that he had stedfastly fixed his heart upon that sweetest promise, Isa. xxvi, 3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.' And his God had graciously made it fully good unto his soul."

And so must every saint do who would sound the sweetness of a promise to the bottom; and make it the arm of God unto him for sound and thorough comfort; even settle his heart fixedly upon it, and set his faith on work to brood it, as it were, with its spiritual heat, that quickness and life may thence come into the soul indeed. For God is wont to make good his promises unto his children proportionally to their trust in them, and dependence upon his truth and goodness for a seasonable performance of them.

Now all these promises in God's blessed book (which adds infinitely to their sweetness and certainty) are sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ (Heb. ix, 16) and confirmed with the oath of Almighty God, Heb. vi, 17, 18; "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." O what a mighty and precious invitation is this, to believe perfectly! The special aim of God's *oath*, whereas his promise had been more than infinitely sufficient, was to

strengthen our consolation ; and therefore every heart true unto Christ ought hence to hold fast, not a faint, wavering, inconstant ; but a strong, stedfast, and unconquerable comfort. Otherwise it sacrilegiously, as it were, robs God of the glorious end for which he swore.

5. The free love of God ; which, how rich and glorious, how bottomless and boundless a treasure it is of all gracious sweetness, abundant comfort, and endless bounty, appears in this ; that Jesus Christ blessed for ever, that invaluable, incomparable jewel, came out of it. " For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life " (John iii, 16) : and therefore every sincere servant of Christ, who upon a serious and sad survey of his Christian ways, finds himself to come so far short of that which God requires and himself desires, that his prayers are very faint, his sorrow for sin very scant, his love unto the brethren too cold, his spending the sabbaths very unfruitful, his spiritual growth since he gave his name to Christ very poor, his profiting by the means he enjoys most unanswerable to the power and excellency thereof, his new obedience almost nothing, &c. (for so he is wont to vilify himself) : whereupon he is much cast down ; and out of this apprehension of his manifold unworthiness concludes against himself, that he hath little cause to be confident in the promises of life ; or to presume of any part and interest in Jesus Christ ; and so begins to retire the trembling hand of his already very weak faith from any more laying hold of comfort : — I say, in such a case, being true hearted, he may safely and upon sure ground have recourse to this ever-springing fountain of immeasurable mercy ; and raise up his drooping soul against all contrary oppositions, with unspeakable and glorious refreshing, from such places as these : " I will love thee freely " (Hos. xiv, 4) ; " Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." " I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins " (Isa. lv, 1 ; and xliii, 25) ; " I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely " (Revel. xxi, 6). God never set the promises on sale, or will ever sell his Son to any. He never said, just so much sorrow, so much sanctity, so much service, or no Christ ; but he ever gives him *freely*. Every truly humbled heart, which will take him at the hands of God's free love, as a husband to be saved by him and to serve him in truth, may have him

for nothing. Yet I must add this; there was never any who received the Lord Jesus savingly, but he laboured sincerely to sorrow as much for sin, to be as holy, to do him as much service as he could possibly. And when he reflected upon his best, he ever desired it had been infinitely better.

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### CHAP. III.

#### Five other Principles of Comfort.

6. THE sweet name of the Lord, which he proclaims, *Exod. xxxiv, 6, 7*, wherein he first expresseth his essence in one word, "The Lord, the Lord:" which doubled is effectual to stir up Moses' attention. Secondly, three attributes: first, his power in one word, "strong." Secondly, his justice in two forms of speech: "not making the wicked innocent; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon children's children, unto the third and fourth generation:" Thirdly, but his special goodness and good affection towards repentant and believing sinners in seven: (1.) "Merciful, and (2.) Gracious; (3.) Long suffering and abundant in (4.) Goodness and (5.) Truth, (6.) Keeping mercy for thousands; (7.) Forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." In which there are contained unanswerable replies to all the scruples, doubts, exceptions, and objections, which may arise in a troubled soul.

(1.) Thou sayest, perhaps, that thou art plunged into the depth of extremest spiritual misery, both in respect of sinfulness and cursedness; the present sense whereof is ready to sink thee into despair. Be it so. Then take my counsel in this case: Cast thine eye upon the first and fairest flower in this heavenly, glorious garland of divine goodness; and thou shalt find a far greater depth of *mercy* ready to swallow up thy depth of misery. The mercy of God and misery in this kind are relatives. No misery, no mercy; much misery, much mercy; transcendent misery, transcendent mercy; the only difference is, the mercy of God is infinite, thy misery finite. And therefore how much spiritual misery soever thou bringest in a broken heart to the throne of grace, God's bountiful hand will weigh out to thee a proportionable measure of mercy; nay, a measure without measure, superabundant, running over. For where misery in a truly humbled soul aboundeth, there mercy doth much more abound.

(2.) Or suppose, that at thy first turning unto God,

though truly humbled, yet thou art tempted not to take Christ, because thou art but even now come out of hell and horrible courses, and as yet hast no good thing in thee at all ; or after some progress in Christianity, reflecting in time of temptation upon thy whole carriage since conversion, and finding it to have been so fruitless and full of failings, thou concludest thyself in thy present feeling to be extremely vile ; of a very doubtful state for thy soul, if not altogether naught : that no professor upon earth walks so unworthily, and if ministers knew thy heart, and weak performance of holy duties, they would not be so forward to press comfort upon thee. I say in these two cases and the like, it is a great happiness and sweetest comfort that the mighty Lord of heaven and earth hath proclaimed himself to be *gracious*, which imports thus much, — to pour out abundance of extraordinary bounty upon a most undeserving party ; to place dearest affection and desire of doing good there, where there is no desert at all. As if a king, to make his royal favours more illustrious, should raise a worthless wretch, a most contemptible vassal, to be his worthiest favourite and highest in his love. And therefore bring unto the throne of grace but a true sense of thy misery, a sincere thirst for mercy, a humble acknowledgment of thine unworthiness ; and God hereupon, for Christ's sake, will think thee worthy of the “ riches of his grace,” the righteousness of his Son ; all the promises in his book, all the comforts of his Spirit, a crown of immortality and bliss ; for he is gracious, and an universal glorious confluence of blessedness in all kinds is promised to poverty in spirit, and shall most certainly to the utmost be made good unto it for ever.

(3.) But, alas ! I, saith another, have most wretchedly mispent the flower and strength of mine age in vanity and pleasure ; in lewdness and lust. The best of my time hath been wofully wasted in Satan's notorious service, and sensual serving myself ; and therefore, though I be now weary of my former ways, and look back upon them with a trembling heart and grieved spirit ; yet I am afraid that God hath given over looking after me ; that his patience towards me is expired, and my day of visitation outstood ; and that he will not vouchsafe to cast his eye of compassion upon such a Blackmoor and leopard as I am ; so overgrown with corruption, and grown old in sin ; especially having so long neglected so great salvation, forsaken mine own mercy so long, and so unthankfully “ despised the riches of his goodness and forbearance leading me to repentance.” I confess, it is something rare to see men gone on so long,

and grown old in sin, to return and give way to any saving work of the ministry, because too often in the mean time they so "harden their hearts, that they cannot repent;" yet notwithstanding, be thou assured in the word of life and truth, if now at length thou be truly touched indeed, and wilt come in earnest, the Father of mercies will receive thee freely to mercy, and embrace thy bleeding soul in the arms of his everlasting love through Christ. For it is a title of highest honour unto him to be "long-suffering." He all this while "waited that he might be gracious unto thee;" (Isa. xxx, 18); and now undoubtedly upon thy first resolution to return in truth he will meet thee with infinitely more compassionate affectionateness than the father in the gospel met his prodigal; who "when he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, &c." (Luke xv, 20.)

(4.) Yea, but, saith another, though I have been a professor long, yet many times my heart is full heavy, and more loath to believe when I seriously and sensibly call to mind the heinousness of my unregenerate time, and see in myself besides, since I was enlightened and would have behaved myself in forwardness and fruitfulness for God answerably to my former folly and furiousness in evil, so many defects and imperfections every day; and such weak, distracted discharging of commanded duties, both to God and man. Take then counsel and comfort in this case, by casting thine eye upon God's *kindness*. He is "abundant in kindness;" which hath these four precious properties: first, to be easily entreated; secondly, to be entreated for the greatest; thirdly, to pass by involuntary infirmities; fourthly, to accept graciously weak services. Even a frail man, if of a more noble, generous, and kind disposition, will be easily appeased for the unpurposed offences, errors, and oversights; and well pleased with the good will, sincere and utmost endeavours, especially of those who he knows to be true-hearted unto him; and desire heartily, if they were able, to do all he desires, even to the height of exactness and expectation. How much more then will our heavenly Father deal so with his children, who is in himself essentially and infinitely kind.

(5.) Yea, but, sayest thou, many times when I reach out the hand of my faith to fetch some special promise into my soul for refreshing and comfort; and weighing them well, and comparing advisedly my own nothingness, worthlessness, vileness, with the riches of mercy, grace, and glory shining in it; and marking the disproportion, I am overwhelmed with admiration and astonishment; and, to tell

you true, say sometimes to myself, Is it possible that this should be so? That so glorious things should belong to such a wretch and worm as I am? But turning thine eye from a distrustful and too much dejected dwelling upon thine own desert, to what Christ hath done for thee, and to the almightiness and all mercifulness of him that promiseth, consider withal, that God is also "abundant in truth." Every promise in his book is as sure as himself, sealed with his Son's blood, and confirmed with his own oath. He must sooner cease to be God and deny himself, which is more than infinitely impossible, and prodigious blasphemy to imagine, than fail in the least circumstance or syllable of his immeasurable love and promises of life to any one that heartily loves him and is true of heart: and therefore when thy thirsty soul makes towards the well of life, by virtue of that promise, Rev. xxi, 6, "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely;" and upon survey of the overflowing rivers of pleasures and bliss, which everlastingly spring thence, begins to retire from it, as too good news to be true: I say then steel thy faith and comfort thyself gloriously by consideration of that "abundant truth" with which he hath crowned every word of his, stronger than a rock of brass, far surer than the pillars of the earth or poles of heaven. Nay, I speak an admirable thing, and of unutterable consolation, which cannot be violated without destruction of the Deity, most blessed and glorious for evermore; and let this ever banish and beat back all scruples, doubts, fears, which at any time offer themselves, and oppose thy unspeakable joy and peace in believing."

(6.) Well, saith another, I easily acknowledge the incomprehensible goodness in this name of God; and hold them most blessed who have their part and portion therein. But for my part I am afraid I come too late: for I have observed the course of the ministry amongst us, and the dispensation of God's mercy in it. At first coming, our town being full of ignorance, profaneness, and much superstitious follies, having never before enjoyed the word with any life or power, we all stood amazed a good while at the majesty and mystery of this new heavenly light. The first messages of the ministry sounded in our ears "as the voice of many waters," mighty and great, but confused; not working in us either joy or terror, but only an extraordinary wonder, and secret acknowledgment of a strange force and more than human power. But afterwards, when our watchman was better acquainted with our ways, and had more fully discovered the state of our souls, the word was unto

us as a "voice of a great thunder," more distinct and particular; breeding not only admiration but fear also; not filling our ears only with an uncouth sound, but our hearts also with a terrible searching. For the sermons of every sabbath came home to our consciences, singling out our several reigning corruptions, beating punctually upon our bosom sins, manifesting clearly our spiritual misery and certain liableness to the extremest wrath of God and endless woe. Whereupon we were all at our wits' end what to do, grew weary of our lives, wished with all our hearts that such a puritan preacher had never come amongst us; told every man almost we met, that we had a fellow at our town would drive us all to despair, distraction, self-destruction, or some mischief or other; that we heard nothing from him but of damnation, and hell, and such horrible things. Now in this second work of the word there was a good number, even some out of that cursed crew and knot of good-fellowship wherein I have been ensnared so long, won unto Jesus Christ. For being enlightened, convinced, and terrified in conscience for their former sinful courses, the continued piercing of the word and work of the spirit of bondage keeping them upon the rack under the dreadful sense of divine wrath and their damnable state a good while; at last they happily resolved, without any more delay, diversion, bye-path, or plunging again into worldly pleasures, to pass on directly, by the light and guidance of the gospel, into the holy path. And so undertook, and hitherto have holden out in profession and a blessed conformity to the better side. But I, and a greater part, a great deal more was the pity, hating heartily to be reformed, and abhorring that precise way so much "spoken against everywhere," into which we conceived such severe ministerial counsel would have conducted us; I say, we wickedly wrested out of our vexed consciences those keen arrows of truth and terror with great indignation; we unhappily hardened our hearts and foreheads against the power of the word, which particularly pursued us every sabbath. Nay, alas! we persecuted the very means which should sanctify us; and men which would have saved us. Here then is my case and complaint; neglecting that blessed season when I was first terrified and troubled in mind, when the angel from heaven, as it were, "troubled the water," and when some, even of mine own companions in iniquity, were converted; I am afraid I now come too late, that the mercy of God to do me spiritual good is already expired; and that the ministry which I have so wretchedly opposed, is the very same to me that it was to the obstinate Jews (Isa. vi,

9, 10). Nay, but yet say not so, though it be with thee as thou hast said ; for our gracious God “ keepeth mercy for thousands.” Here you must know that a finite number is put for an infinite, and an infinite indeed. And therefore if thou now be in earnest, and willing to come in, in truth ; and those thine other brethren in good-fellowship, and hundreds, thousands, millions more, or any whosoever to the world’s end, God hath mercy in store for you all ; and being all weary of all your sins, unfeignedly thirsting for the well of life, resolving for the time to come upon new courses, company, and conversation, you shall all be most welcome to Jesus Christ. Even the last man upon earth, bringing a truly broken heart to the throne of grace, shall be crowned as richly and with as large a portion of God’s infinite mercy and Christ’s invaluable merit as Adam and Eve, or whosoever laid first hold of that first promise, “ The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.”

(7.) Yea, but, alas ! I have been no ordinary sinner. My corruptions have carried me beyond the villanies of the vilest you can name. Not only the variety, but the notori-ousness also, and enormity of my wicked ways have set an infamous brand upon me, even in the sight of the world ; beside those secret pollutions and sinful practices which no eye but that which is ten thousand times brighter than the sun ever beheld. Had I not been extremely outrageous, stained with abominations of deepest dye, and gone on thus with a high hand, I might have had some hope ; but now I know not what to say ! Take notice, then, to the end that nothing at all may possibly hinder or any way discourage any poor soul that sincerely seeks for mercy and desires to turn truly on God’s side, from assurance of gracious accep-tation and entertainment at his throne of grace ; that it is natural also to his name “ to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin ;” that is, sins of all sorts, kinds, and degrees whatsoever. There is none so hateful and heinous, whether natural corruption, or ordinary outward transgression, or highest presumption, but, upon repentance, God is most able, ready, and willing to remit it.

7. God the Father’s compassionate pangs of infinite affec-tion, and forwardness to entertain in his arms of mercy all true penitents. “ As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live : turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways : for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?” (Ezek. xxxiii, 11.) “ Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean ? when shall it once be ?” (Jer. xiii, 27.) “ They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from

him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord," (Jer. iii, 1). "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee" (Psalm lxxxi, 13—16). "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me" (Isa. xlvi, 18, 19).

8. His merciful almightiness in putting life and lightsomeness into the most dead and darkest heart. "Seek him," saith the prophet, "that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning" (Amos v, 8). Suppose thou settest thyself to seek God's face and favour, and art presently set upon with this temptation—But alas! my soul is so black with sin and dark with sorrow, that it is to no purpose for me to proceed. But now, in this case, consider who he is that thou seekest. It is he that made of nothing those beautiful, shining, glorious constellations, Orion and the Pleiades; he it is that turneth the darkest midnight into the brightest morning.

9. Christ's sweetest, dearest, most melting invitations of all truly troubled souls for sin unto the well of life, and their own everlasting welfare. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat. xi, 28). "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," &c. (Matt. xxiii, 37). "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" (Luke xix, 41, 42.) "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John vii, 37).

10. Experience perhaps of the comforter, converted from a more wicked and desperate course than the patient himself. And it doth not a little refresh the heart of him, who

grievously wounded in conscience, thereupon sendeth for a skilful and faithful mesenger of God; and when he hath opened his case fully unto him heareth him say, when he hath said all: "My case was far worse than yours every way." Nay, but besides those notorious sins I have named unto you, I have defiled myself with many secret execrable lusts. Be it so, saith the spiritual physician, yet in the days of my vanity I have been guilty of more and more heinous crimes than any you have yet spoken of. Yea, but even now, when I have most need of, should most prize, reverence, and lay hold upon God's blessed word, Son, and promises, I am continually beset with many abhorred, villanous, and prodigious injections about them. Not a man alive, replies the man of God, hath had his head troubled with more hideous thoughts of this hellish nature than I.

11. That precious parable (Luke xv) wherein all those loving passages of the father unto his prodigal son; to wit, "his beholding him when he was yet a great way off; his compassion, running towards him, falling upon his neck, kissing him, putting on him the best robe and the ring, killing the fatted calf," &c.;—do shadow that immeasurable, incomprehensible love of God the Father to every one that is willing to come out of the devil's cursed service into the good way; but come as far short of expressing it to the life, as the infinite greatness of Almighty God surpasseth the finite frailty of a weak man and worm of the earth.

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#### CHAP. IV.

Four Conclusions of Comfort, drawn from those places of Scripture which set forth the Lord's dealing with us as a Father with his Children.

IN the second place, let us take a view of some of those most delicious and sweetest streams of dearest comfort, which spring abundantly out of that fruitful fountain of compassion and love—"Like as a father pitieth his children; so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Psalm ciii, 13; see also Deut. viii, 5; and Mal. iii, 17).

Hence may we draw refreshing enough to our thirsty souls in many passages of heavy thoughts and grievous complaints about our spiritual state.

1. In the distempers and dampers of prayer, thus:—

Suppose the dearest son of the most loving father to lie grievously sick, and out of the extremity of anguish to cry out and complain unto him, that he is so full of pain in

every part that he knows not which way to turn himself, or what to do; and thereupon entreats him by the love he bears him, to touch him tenderly, to lay him softly, to mollify all he may his painful misery, and give him ease. How ready, think you, would such a father be, with all tenderness and care to give his helping hand in such a rueful case! But yet if he should grow sicker and weaker, so that he could not speak at all, but only look his father in the face with watery eyes, and moan himself unto him with sighs and groans, and other dumb expressions of his increased pain and desire to speak, would not this yet strike deeper into the father's tender heart; pierce and melt with more feeling pangs of compassion, and make his bowels yearn within him with an addition of extraordinary solicitude to do him good? Even just so will thy heavenly Father be affected and deal with thee, in hearing, helping, and showing mercy, when all thy strength of prayer is gone, but only groans and sighs. Nay, with incomparably more affectionateness: for, look how far God is higher than man in majesty and greatness, which is by an infinite distance and disproportion; so far doth he pass him in tenderheartedness and love. See Isaiah lv, 8, 9.

Or be it so that thou art able to speak unto God, and in some measure to utter thy mind, yet in thy thought it is so weakly, coldly, and confusedly, that thou thinkest it had been better altogether to have held thy peace. Take notice here, that God's child is able, first, sometimes to pour out his heart unto his God with life and power: secondly, sometimes to say something, but with much coldness, deadness of heart, and distractedness (as he complains), without his wonted feeling and freedom of spirit: thirdly, at other times he can say just nothing, but groan and sigh, and only desire he could pray. For this last, look upon the last passage. For the second, to wit, when the Christian is troubled that he can say something and speak words unto God, yet without that order, efficacy, fit phrase and coming off so comfortably, as he thinks it to be found in other professors; I say in this case consider, that as a father is more delighted with the stammering and fluttering, as it were, with the inarticulate and imperfect talk of his own little child when it first begins to speak, than with the exactest eloquence of the most famous orator upon earth; so assuredly our Heavenly Father is infinitely better pleased with the broken, interrupted passages and periods of prayer in thee, an upright heart, heartily grieved that he can do no better, nor offer up a more lively, hearty, and orderly sacrifice, than with the excellently composed, fine-phrased,

and most methodical petitions of the most learned pharisee. Nay, his soul extremely loathes the one, and graciously accepts the other in Jesus Christ. As concerning the complaint of coldness ; be assured, that though thy prayers proceeded out of thy mouth faint and feeble, cold and uncomfortable, yet springing from a sincere heart, purified by faith, truly humbled under God's mighty hand for sin, seconded with groans and grief, with a holy anger and self-indignation that they be not more fervent and piercing, and offered in obedience unto God ; they are most certainly as it were by the way fortified and enlivened with the pacifying perfections and intercessory spirit of Jesus Christ, sweetly perfumed with the precious odours of his fresh bleeding merits and blessed mediation, so that they strike the ears of the Almighty with far greater strength and irresistible importunity than is ordinarily imagined ; and are as sweet smelling sacrifices in his nostrils ; the very sight of whose crucified Son at his right hand tendering the suit can calm his most angry countenance, and convert, by a sacred meritorious atonement, his displeasures and wrath into compassions and peace. Now blessed be God that the weak prayers and broken sighs of tempted and troubled spirits have this happy promise and prerogative, that before they press, as it were, into the presence of God the Father, they are mingled in the mean time with the sovereign and satisfactory incense in the "golden censer," whence evaporating out of the angel's hand (I mean the "Angel of the Covenant," for so the truest interpreters understand the place) they ascend into the sight of our gracious Father, incorporated and enwoven into that precious and pleasing fume ; and that it pleaseth the blessed Spirit, in the needful time of spiritual extremities, to draw the petitions of our sometimes speechless, heavy, and distracted hearts ; Jesus Christ the great angel of the covenant to perfect, perfume, and present them : he that by an excellency and title of the highest honour is styled the Hearer of prayers, to receive them into his merciful hand and bosom of compassionate acceptance ! Go on then, poor soul ! thou that sorely droopest under the sensible weight of thy manifold weaknesses and unworthiness this way ; and thereupon sometimes sinfully drawest back, with some thoughts of giving over quite, which is that the devil desires, and would utterly undo thee for ever,—press forward in the name of Christ unto the throne of grace with a lighter heart than thou art wont. Shall the Lord Jesus call and cry for a pardon for those who put him to death, who were so far from seeking unto him, that like so many evening

wolves they sought and sucked his blood ; and will he shut his ears, thinkest thou, from thy complaints and groans, who values one drop of his blood to quench thy spiritual thirst at a higher price than the worth of many worlds ? Comfort thyself invincibly. It cannot be.

2. In the faintness of faith, and want of feeling.

Thou beholdest sometimes a father holding a little child in his arms : now, whether dost thou think is the child safe by its own or by the father's hold ? It clasps about the father with its little weak hands as well as it can ; but the strength of its safety is in the father's arm ; nay, and the father holds the faster when at any time he perceives the child to have left its hold. Thou art tied as it were unto Christ by a double bond ; first, of the Spirit, and secondly, of faith. Thou layest hold on Christ by faith, and he holds thee by his Spirit. Now thy infant faith, or after some good standing in Christianity weakened and sorely wounded in thy present feeling, hath lost its holdfast ; and therefore thou thinkest all is gone, and walkest dejectedly and uncomfortably, as though not any promise in God's book, or drop of Christ's blood were thine. But assure thyself, being sound at the heart-root, and " walking in the light, as God is in the light," thy heavenly Father in this case holds thee so fast by his Spirit, that no man or devil, not all the powers of darkness or gates of hell, can possibly pluck thee out of his hand. Nay, the excellency of his power is most gloriously improved and made more illustrious in thy greatest extremities and extremest spiritual weakness ; and he holds it his highest honour to hold thee the fastest when thy hold is gone. Here then and upon this ground thou hast a calling, and mayest comfortably, for he is ever most loving and tender-hearted in times of temptation to all that are true of heart, exercise that most excellent act of faith, " to believe without feeling : " to believe when the face of God doth shine upon thee with sensible refreshing, and when thou enjoyest plentiful and pregnant proofs of his favour, is no great matter, no such mastery ; but to believe when all sense of God's love is gone, and the light of his countenance hid from thee, when all go quite cross and contrary in the apprehension of carnal reason, then is the highest praise ; this is the perfection of faith. The very dull, senseless, and soul-less earth upon which we tread, may teach us to rest and depend upon God in such a case. It is a mighty and massy body, planted in the midst of thin air, and hangs upon just nothing in the world, but only upon God's word. By that alone it is there established immoveably, keeps its place most steadily, never stirs an

inch from it. It hath no props nor pillars to uphold it ; no bars nor beams to fasten it ; nothing to stay and support it, but the bare word of God alone. " He upholdeth all things by the word of his power," saith the apostle, Heb. i, 3 ; and yet not all the creatures in the world can shake it, or make it tremble. Be it so then that thy faith hath lost its holdfast ; that for the present thou findest no feeling ; no encouragements of " joy and peace in believing," no sensible pawns and pledges of God's wonted favour ; yet for all this, cast thyself upon the sure word of that mighty God who hath established all the ends of the earth ; and reared such a great and goodly building where there was no foundation ; and doubtless thou shalt be more than infinitely, everlastingly safe, and settled like " mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever."

### 3. In failings of new obedience.

Thou puttest thy son in employment, settest him about thy business, he improves the utmost of his skill, strength, and endeavour to do thee the best service he can, and please thee, if it were possible, to perfection ; but yet comes short of what thou desirest, and fails in many particulars ; and therefore he weeps and grieves, and is much troubled that he can give no better contentment. Now tell me, thou whose heart is warmed with the tenderness of a father's affection, whether thou wouldst not be most ready and willing to pardon and pass by all defects and failings in this kind ? Nay, I know thou wouldst rejoice and bless God that he had given thee a child so obedient, willing, and affectionate. In like manner thy heavenly Father sets thee on work, to believe, repent, pray, read the Scriptures, hear the word, confer, meditate, love the brethren, sanctify his sabbaths, humble thyself in days of fasting and prayer, pour out thy soul day and night (as the times require) in compassion, fellow-feeling, and strong cries for the afflictions of Joseph, the destruction of the churches, and those brethren of thine which have so long lain in blood and tears ; to be industrious and serious in all works of justice, mercy, and truth. And thou goest about these blessed tasks with an upright heart and obedience unto God, but the several performances come far short of what his word requires and thy heart desires ; and thereupon thou mournest and grieveest, and afflictest thy soul in secret, because thou canst not come off with more power and life ; nor bring that glory unto God in thy Christian walking, which so many mercies, means, and such a ministry may exact at thy hands. In this case now, of these involuntary failings and humble disposition of thy heart, therefore be most assured thy All-sufficient

Father “ will spare thee as a man spareth his own son, that serveth him.” Nay, and with so much more kindness and love, “ as the heavens are higher than the earth,” and God greater than man.

#### 4. In case of spiritual desertion.

A father solacing himself with his little child, and delighting in its pretty and pleasing behaviour, is wont sometimes to step aside into a corner or behind a door, upon purpose to quicken yet more its love and longing after him, and try the impatency and eagerness of its affections. In the mean time he hears it cry, run about, and call upon him, and yet he stirs not, but forbears to appear; not for want of compassion and kindness, which the more it grieves the more abounds; but that it may prize more dearly the father's presence, that they may meet more merrily, and rejoice in the enjoyment of each other more heartily. Conceive then, and consider to thine own exceeding comfort, that thy heavenly Father deals just so with thee in a spiritual desertion. He sometimes hides his face from thee, and withdraws his quickening and refreshing presence for a time, not for want of love, for he loves thee freely; he loves thee with an everlasting love; he loves thee with the very same love with which he loves Jesus Christ; and that dear Son of his loves thee with the same love his Father loves him. But to put more heat and life into thine affections towards him and heavenly things; to cause thee to relish communion with Jesus Christ, when thou enjoyest it, more sweetly; to preserve it more carefully; to joy in it more thankfully; and to shun more watchfully whatsoever might rob thee of it; to stir up all the powers of thy soul and all the graces of God in thee; to seek his face and favour again with more extraordinary and universal seriousness and industry. For we find with pleasure, possess with singular contentment, and keep with special care, what we have sought with pain. We may see this in the spouse, Cant. iii, 1, 6, under the pressure of a grievous desertion. Ponder every particular. “ By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of

the field, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please." And lastly, that when the comfortable beams of God's lightsome countenance shall break out again upon thy soul, and thy beloved is returned, thou mayest sing that triumphant song of faith most joyfully; "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Desertions then and delays of this nature are fruits of thy heavenly Father's love, and ought to be no discouragements unto thee at all, holding thy integrity. His love thereby is intended towards thee by the restraint of the influence and sense of it from thy soul, as a brook grows big by damming it up for a while; and thy love is more inflamed towards him, when thou feelest by the want of it what a heaven upon earth it is to have his face shine upon thee with its quickening, refreshing presence: and that a sensible embracement of Jesus Christ in the arms of thy faith is the very life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body, the crown of all sweet contentment in this vale of tears, and a piece, as it were, of everlasting pleasures.

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## CHAP. V.

Eight Conclusions more drawn from the afore-mentioned places.

### 5. IN times of trial.

Thou seest sometimes a father setting down his little one upon its feet to try its strength, and whether it be yet able to stand by itself or no; but withal he holds his arms on both sides to uphold it, if he see it incline either way, and to preserve it from hurt. Assure thyself thy heavenly Father takes care of thee with infinitely more tenderness in all thy trials, either by outward afflictions or inward temptations. "Though thou shouldst fall, yet shalt thou not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth thee with his hand" (Psalm xxxvii, 24). Never did goldsmith attend so curiously and punctually upon those precious metals he casts into the fire, to observe the very first season, and be sure that they tarry no longer in the furnace than the dross be wasted, and they be thoroughly purified and fitted for some excellent use, as our gracious God lovingly waits to take thee out of trouble and temptation when the rust is removed from thy spiritual armour, thy graces shine out, and thou art heartily humbled and happily fitted to do him more glorious service for the time to come; I mean when he hath attained the end which he mercifully intended in love and for thy good.

## 6. In thoughts of our unworthiness.

David commanded Joab and the other captains "to entreat the young man Absalom gently for his sake" (2 Sam. xviii, 5). A rebellious, traitorous son up in arms against his own father, gracelessly and unnaturally thirsting, out of a furious ambitious humour, to wring the regal sceptre out of his hand, and to set the imperial crown upon his own head. How dearly and tenderly then will the Father of mercies deal with a poor humbled soul that sighs and seeks for his favour infinitely more than any earthly treasure, or the glory of a thousand worlds!

7. I will suppose thou hast broke some special vow (which were a grievous thing) made before the sacrament upon some day of humiliation, or such other occasion, and so forfeited thyself, as it were, and thy soul into the hands of God's justice, to be disposed of to the dungeon of utter darkness, if thou wert served as thy sin hath deserved. And thereupon thou art much afflicted and sore troubled in mind, to have suffered thyself to be so sottishly ensnared again in such a disavowed sin, against so strong a purpose. But here consider whether thou, being a father, wouldst take the forfeiture of a bond, and advantage of breaking day, especially full sore against his will, from thy dearest child, entreating thee to regard him kindly. Much, nay infinitely less will thy heavenly Father deal hardly with thee in such a case, if thou complain at the throne of grace with a grieved spirit, renew thy covenant, and tell him truly that thou wilt, by the help of the Holy Ghost, guard thy heart with a narrower watch and stronger resolution for the time to come. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John i, 9); and in such a case we have ever a blessed "advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John ii, 1).

A father sometimes threatens and offers to throw his little one out of his arms; but upon purpose only to make him cling closer unto him. Our heavenly Father may seem to cast off his child, and leave him for a while in the hands of Satan for inward temptation, or to the rage of his blood-thirsty agents for outward persecution: but it is only to draw him nearer to himself by more serious seeking and sure dependence in the time of trouble, and that with the hand of his faith he may lay surer hold upon his all-sufficiency.

And the child, especially if of riper age and wiser thoughts, laughs perhaps in the father's face, dreads no danger, dreams not of being hurt: and what is the reason, think ye? Only because he knows he that holds him is his father. So thy heavenly Father holds thee as it were over

hell in some strong temptation, upon purpose to terrify thee from tampering so much with the devil's baits ; so that thou seest nothing about thee for the present but darkness and discomforts, and the very horrors of eternal death ready to take hold of thee ; yet for all this, upon the ground of this loving, gracious resemblance, thou mayest be comforted and cry confidently with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job xiii, 15) ; with David, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psalm xxiii, 4). "Who is among you," saith the Prophet (Isaiah l, 10), "that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

9. A son, by the seduction of some dissolute and drunken Belials is drawn into lewd and licentious company, and so plunges presently over head and ears into pestilent courses ; falls unhappily to swaggering, drinking, gaming, the mirth and madness of wine and pleasures ; and at length to express to the life an exact conformity to that complete character given in the book of Wisdom\* of the professors of good-fellowship (as they call it) and epicurism, both for pursuit of sensual delights and persecution of true professors, whereby he wastes his patrimony, cuts the heart of his parents, and wounds his conscience. His father mourns and grieves, consults and casts about with all love and longing for his recovery and return. At length, out of sense and conscience of his base and debauched behaviour, vile company, dishonouring God, banishing good motions, "he comes to himself," entreats his father upon his knees with many tears that he would be pleased to pardon what is past, receive him into favour again, and he will faithfully endeavour to displease him no more, but redeem the loss of the former with the improvement of the time to come. How willingly and welcomely think you would such a father receive such a son into the bosom of his fatherly affection, and arms of dearest embracement. And yet so, and infinitely more, is our heavenly Father merciful and melting towards any of his relapsed children, returning unto his gracious throne with true remorse and hearty grief for so going astray ; which is an incomparable comfort in case of backsliding, which yet God forbid.

10. A father indeed will lay heavier burthens upon his son now grown into years and strength, and puts him to sorer labour and harder tasks ; but while he is very young he is wont to forbear him with much tenderness and compassion ; because he knows he is scarcely able to carry him-

\* Wisd. ii, 6, &c. ; xii, &c.

self out of the mire. Even so, but with infinitely more affectionateness and care, watchfulness and love, doth our heavenly Father bear in his arms and forbear a babe in Christ. See Isa. xl, 11. This may be a very sweet and precious cordial to weak consciences at their first conversion, who when they cast their eye upon the heinousness and number of their sins, the fiery and furious darts of the devil, the frowns and angry foreheads of their carnal friends, the world's lowering and enmity, the rebelliousness and untowardness of their own hearts, pressing upon them all at once, and so considering that "refraining from evil, they make themselves a prey," are ready to sink and faint, and fear that they shall never hold out. For they may hence ground upon it, being upright-hearted, and believing that God, who knows their weakness full well, "will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it." So that over all these adversaries and ungodly oppositions they shall most certainly be more than conquerors.

11. When thou art dejected in spirit, and walkest more heavily, because thou comest short of stronger Christians in all performances, services, duties, and fruitful walking, and thereupon sufferest slavish doubts and distrusts, lest thy ground-work be not well laid, and beat back and bar out all spiritual joy and expected contentments in thy Christian course; I say then, and in such a case, suppose a father should call unto him in haste two of his children, one of three years old, the other of thirteen: they both make all the haste they can, but the elder makes much more speed, and yet the little one comes on waddling as fast as it can, and if it had more strength it would have matched the other. Now would not the father accept of the younger's utmost endeavour according to its strength, as well as of the elder's faster gait, being stronger? I am sure he would; and that with more tenderness too, and taking it in his arms to encourage it. And so certainly will thy heavenly Father deal with thee in the like case about thy spiritual state, being true-hearted, and heartily grieving, praying, and endeavouring to do better.

12. Suppose a child to fall sick in a family. The father presently sets the whole house on work for the recovery of its welfare. Some run for the physician, others for friends and neighbours; some tend it, others watch it; all contribute their several abilities, endeavours, and diligence to do it good; and thus they continue in motion, affection, and extraordinary employment about it, far more than about all the rest that are well, until it recover. With the very

same but incomparably more tender care and compassion will thy heavenly Father visit thee in all thy spiritual maladies and sicknesses of soul. The whole blessed Trinity is stirred, as it were, extraordinarily, and takes to heart thy troubles at such a time. Even as a shepherd takes more pains and exercises more pity and tenderness about his sheep when they are out of tune. See Isa. xl, 11; Ezek. xxxiv, 16; upon which places hear the paraphrase of a blessed divine: "The Lord will not be unfaithful to thee if thou be upright with him, though thou be weak in thy carriage to him; for 'he keeps his covenant for ever;' and therefore in Isa. xl, the Lord expresseth it thus: 'You shall know me as sheep know their shepherd, and I will make a covenant with you,' and thus and thus I will deal with you. And how is that? Why the covenant is not thus only—as long as you keep within the bounds and keep within the fold, as long as you go along the paths of righteousness and walk in them;—but this is the covenant that I will make: I will drive you according to that you are able to bear. If any be great with young, I will drive them softly; if they be lame that they are not able to go, saith he, 'I will take them up in mine arms and carry them in my bosom.' If you compare with Ezek. xxxiv, you shall find there he puts down all the slips we are subject to (speaking of the time of the gospel, when Christ should be the shepherd), he shows the covenant that he will make with those that are his. Saith he; 'if any thing be lost,' if a sheep lose itself, this is my covenant, 'I will find it;' if it be driven away by any violence of temptation, 'I will bring it back again:' If there be a breach made into their hearts by any occasion through sin and lust, 'I will heal them and bind them up.' This the Lord will do; this is the covenant that he makes." But I was telling you the whole blessed Trinity grieves (if I may so speak) after a special manner in all the spiritual troubles especially of all those who are true of heart. God the Father's bowels of mercy yearn compassionately over thee when he sees thee spiritually sick. The distressed and disconsolate state of thy soul, puts him into such melting and affectionate pangs as these: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires," &c. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned," &c. (Isa. liv, 11; and xl, 1, 2.) Jesus Christ, out of his own experience, knoweth full well what it is to be grievously tempted, what it is to have the most hideous

thoughts and horrible injections thrown into the mind that can be possibly imagined ; nay, that the devil himself can devise. See Matt. iv, 6, 9. What a hell it is to want the comfortable influence of the Father's pleased face and favour. See Matt. xxvii, 46. And therefore he cannot choose but be "afflicted in our afflictions;" and very sensibly and sweetly tender-hearted in all our spiritual troubles. They pity us most in our sicknesses, who have felt the same themselves. "In that he himself suffered and was tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii, 18). As for the blessed Spirit, it is his proper work, as it were, "to comfort them that mourn in Zion ; to give unto them beauty for ashes ; the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." And yet besides all this, thy heavenly Father, in the distress of thy soul, sets also on work the church of God about thee ; faithful ministers to pray for, and prepare seasonable and sound arguments, reasons, counsels, and comforts out of God's blessed book, to support, quicken, revive, and recover thee all they can ; private Christians to commend thy case unto the "throne of grace and mercy;" and that extraordinarily with mightiness of prayer upon their more solemn days of humiliation.

Thus, and in the like manner, peruse all the compassionate passages of the most tender-hearted parents to their best-beloved children in all cases of danger and distress ; and so and infinitely more tenderly will our heavenly Father deal with all that are upright-hearted in all their troubles, trials, and temptations. For the dearest love of the most affectionate father and mother to their child is nothing to that, which he bears to those that fear him (Isa. xlix, 15 ; Psalm ciii, 13 ; Deut. viii, 5),

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## CHAP. VI.

A Principle of Comfort from something within us, confirmed from several Testimonies and Instances of Scripture, and by one Reason.

THIRDLY. There is a precious principle in the mystery of salvation, which, as a comforting cordial water, serves to quicken and revive in the swoonings and faintings of the body, defection of the spirits, and sinking of the heart ; so it may be sovereign to support and succour in afflictions and dejections of soul, and weaknesses of our spiritual state. It is thus delivered by divines :—

"A constant and earnest desire to be reconciled to God,

to believe and to repent, if it be in a touched heart, is in acceptation with God as reconciliation, faith, repentance itself\*.”

“A weak faith shows itself by this grace of God, namely, an unfeigned desire, not only of salvation (for that the wicked and graceless man may have), but of reconciliation with God in Christ. This is a sure sign of faith in every touched and humbled heart, and it is peculiar to the elect †.”

“Those are blessed who are displeased with their own doubting and unbelief; if they have a true earnest desire to be purged from this distrust, and to believe in God through Christ ‡.”

“Our desire of grace, faith, and repentance, are the graces themselves which we desire; at least, in God’s acceptation, who accepteth of the will for the deed, and of our affections for the actions §.”

“Hungering and thirsting desires are evidences of a repenting heart ||.”

“True desire argues the presence of things desired, and yet argues not the feeling of it ¶.”

“It may not be dissembled, that there are in the world many definitions or descriptions of faith, such as do not comprehend in them that only thing which is the chief stay of thousands of the dear servants of God, and that is, desires which may not be denied to be of the nature of faith. I express my meaning thus: That when a man or woman is so far exercised in the spiritual seeking of the Lord his God, that he would be willing to part with the world and all things thereof if he had them in his own possession, so that by the Spirit and promises of God he might be assured that the sins of his former life, and such as presently do burthen his soul were forgiven him; and that he might believe that God were now become his God in Christ;—I would not doubt to pronounce that this person (thus prizing remission of sins at this rate, that he would sell all to buy this pearl) did undoubtedly believe. Not only because it is a truth (though a paradox) that the desire to believe is faith; but also because our Saviour Christ doth not doubt to affirm that they are blessed that ‘hunger and thirst after righteousness, because they shall be satisfied’ (Matt. v, 6).

\* Perkins, in his Grain of Mustard Seed, Concl. 3.

† Idem, in his Exposition of the Creed.

‡ Idem, upon the Sermon on the Mount.

§ Downam, in his Christian Warfare, chap. xlii.

|| Dyke, of Repentance, chap. xv.

¶ T. T. upon Psalm xxxii.

And to 'him that is athirst I will give to drink of the water of life freely' (Revel. xxi, 6). And David doubted not to say, 'The Lord heareth the desire of the humble' (Psalm x, 17)\*."

"I think, whensoever the humbled sinner sees an infinite excellency in Christ, and the favour of God by him, that it is more worth than all the world, and so sets his heart upon it that he is resolved to seek it without ceasing, and to part with all for the obtaining it; now, I take it, is faith begun."—"What graces thou unfeignedly desirest, and constantly usest the means to attain, thou hast †."

"There is no rock more sure than this truth of God, that the heart that complaineth of the want of grace, desireth above all things the supply of that want, useth all holy means for the procurement of that supply, cannot be destitute of saving grace ‡."

"Such are we by imputation as we be in affection. And he is now no sinner, who for the love he beareth to righteousness would be no sinner. Such as we be in desire and purpose, such we be in reckoning and account with God, who giveth that true desire and holy purpose to none but to his children whom he justifieth §."

"We must remember that God accepts affecting for effecting; willing for working; desires for deeds; purposes for performances; pence for pounds; and unto such as do their endeavour, hath promised his grace enabling them every day to do more and more ||."

"If there be in thee a sorrow for thine unbelief; a will and desire to believe; and a care to increase in faith by the use of good means; there is a measure of true faith in thee, and by it thou mayest assure thyself that thou art the child of God ¶."

"It is a great grace of God to feel the want of God's graces in thyself, and to hunger and thirst after them \*\*."

"If you desire healing of your nature, groan in desire for grace, perceive your foulness unto a loathing of yourself, fear not, sin hath no dominion over you."—"Sense of want of grace, complaint and mourning from that sense, desire, settled and earnest, with such mourning to have the want supplied, use of good means, with attending upon him therein for this supply, is surely of grace."—"What graces

\* Byfield, in his Exposition upon the Epistle to the Colossians, chap. i, ver. 4.

† Rogers of Dedham, in his Doctrine of Faith, chap. ii.

‡ Crook, serm. iii.

§ Greenham.

|| Dyke, of Self-Deceiving, chap. xix.

¶ Perkins, on Galatians.

\*\* Broad, p. 88.

thou unfeignedly desirest and constantly usest the means to attain, thou hast\*.”

Take it in short from me thus :—

A true desire of grace argues a saving and comfortable estate.

The truth of which appears clearly by scripture, reason, both ancient and modern divines.

*Proofs:* “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. v, 6). Here to a desire of grace is annexed a promise of blessedness, which comprehends all the glory and pleasures of Christ’s kingdom here, and all heavenly joys and everlasting bliss hereafter. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink” (John vii, 37). “The Lord heareth the desire of the humble” (Psalm x, 17). “He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him” (Psalm cxlv, 19). “The Lord filleth the hungry with good things” (Luke i, 53). “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. xxii, 17). “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,” &c. “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground” (Isa. lv, 1; and xliv, 3).

“O Lord, I beseech thee,” saith Nehemiah, “let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants who desire to fear thy name.” Here those who desire to fear the Lord are styled his servants; and proposed as men qualified and in a fit disposition to have their prayers heard, their petitions granted, their distresses relieved, their affairs blessed with success. And no doubt this man of God would make special choice of such attributes and affections, which might prove powerful and pleasing arguments to draw from God compassion, favour, and protection. And therefore a true-hearted desire to fear the Lord is a sign of his servant.

Abraham, as you know, Gen. xxii, did not indeed when it came to the point, sacrifice his son; an angel from heaven stayed his hand. Only he had a will, purpose, and resolution, if the Lord would so have it, even to shed the blood of his only child. Now this desire to please God was graciously accepted at his hands as though the thing had been done, and thereupon crowned with as many blessings as there are stars in the heaven, and sands upon the sea shore. “By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thine only son” (and yet he spilt not a drop of his blood, save only

\* Wilson on Faith.

in purpose and preparedness to do God's will), "therefore will I surely bless thee and greatly multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Gen. xxii, 16, 17).

Rich men cast into the treasury large gifts and royal offerings no doubt (Mark xii); for it is there said, "Many that were rich cast in much" (ver. 41); and yet the poor widow's two mites, receiving worth and weight from her holy and hearty affection, in Christ's esteem did outvalue and overweigh them all. "Verily," saith Christ, "I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury."

*Reasons.* 1. One argument may be taken from the blessed nobleness of God's nature, and the incomparable sweetness of his divine disposition, which by infinite distance, without all degree of comparison and measure of proportion, doth surpass and transcend the ingenuousness of the noblest spirit upon earth. Now, men of ingenuous breeding and generous dispositions are wont to receive sweetest contentment, and rest best satisfied in prevailing over and winning the hearts, good wills, and affections of those who attend or depend upon them. Outward performances, gratifications, and visible effects, are often beyond our strength and means; many times mingled and quite marred with hypocrisies, disguisements, feigned accommodations and flatteries, with self-advantages, bye-respects, and private ends. But inward reverence and love, kind and affectionate stirrings of the heart, are ever and alone in our power, and ever by an uncontrollable freedom exempted from enforcement, dissembling, and formality. No marvel then though the most royal and heroic spirits prize most, and be best pleased with possession of men's hearts, and being assured of them can more easily pardon the want of those outward acts of sufficiency and service (most minded by basest men) which they see to be above the reach of their ability and power. Now if it be so that even ingenuous and noble natures accept with special respect and esteem the affectionateness and hearty well willing of their followers and favourites, though they want dexterity and means to express it actually in visible effects and executions answerable to their affections, how much more are spiritual longings, holy affections, thirsty desires, graciously accepted of that God, in respect of whose compassions, the bowels of the most merciful man upon earth are cruelty; in respect of whose unmeasurably amiable, melting, sweetest disposition, the ingenuousness of the noblest spirit is doggedness and disdain. Especially since

men's good turns and offices of love turn many times to our good and benefit, to our advancement, profit, preferment : but our "well-doing extendeth not unto God" (Psalm xvi, 2). That infinite essential glory with which the highest Lord, alone to be blessed, adored, and honoured by all for ever, was, is, and shall be everlastingly crowned ; can neither be impaired by the most desperate rebellions, nor enlarged by the most glorious good deeds, "Can a man," saith Eliphaz to Job, "be profitable unto God : as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself ? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous ? Or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect ? If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him ? Or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him ? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him ? or what receiveth he of thine hand ? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art ; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man" (Job xxii, 2, 3 ; and xxxv, 6, 7, 8). Were all the wicked men upon earth turned into human beasts, desperate Belials, nay, incarnate devils ; and the whole world full of those outrageous giants of Babel, and those also of the old world : and all with combined force and fury should bend and band themselves against heaven, yet they could not hurt God. "The Lord is king, be the people never so impatient ; he sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet." Or were all the sons of men Abrahams or angels, and as many in number as the stars in heaven ; and as shining both with inward graces and outward good deeds as they are in visible glory ; yet could they make no addition unto that incomprehensible Majesty above ; they could not confer so much as one drop to that boundless and bottomless sea of goodness, or the least glimpse unto that Almighty Sun of Glory. "All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isa. xl, 17). Our sins hurt him not ; our holiness helps him not. It is only for our good, that God would have us good. No good, no gain accrues unto him by our goodness. For what good can come by our imperfect goodness to that which is already infinitely good ? What glory can be added by our dimness to him, which is already incomprehensibly glorious ? Every infinite thing is naturally and necessarily incapable of addition ; possibility of which supposed, implies contradiction, and destroys the nature of infinity. If it be so then, that good turns do good unto men, and yet out of their ingenuousness they most esteem good wills, true-heartedness, kind affections, and can well find in their hearts to pass by failings where there is heart

and good will ; to pardon easily want of exactness in performance where there are unfeigned purposes ; how much more will your gracious God, who gains nothing by all the good works in the world, out of the depth of his dearest compassions, kindly interpret and accept in good part the holy longings and hungry desires of a panting and bleeding soul ? How dearly will he love the love of a true-hearted Nathanael ? How willingly will he take the will for the deed, the groanings of the heart before the greatest sacrifice ?

But lest you mistake, take notice here of a twofold glory : —

1. Essential, infinite, everlasting. It is impossible that this should either receive disparagement and diminution, or addition and increase by any created power. And this I meant in the precedent passage.

2. The other I may call accidental, finite, temporary. This ebbs or flows, shines or is overshadowed, as goodness or gracelessness prevails in the world ; as the kingdom of Christ or powers of darkness get the upper hand amongst the sons of men. In this regard indeed, rebellious wretches dishonour God upon earth, I confess ; and godly men by their holy duties, good works, and gracious behaviour, make his name more illustrious in the world ; but what is this to that essential, infinite, everlasting glory, which was as great and full in all that former eternity, before the world was, when God, blessed for ever, enjoyed only his glorious self, angels, men, and this great universe lying all hid as yet in the dark and abhorred dungeon of nothing, as now it is or ever shall be ?

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## CHAP. VII.

One Reason more, confirming the Truth of the former Principle.

*Reason 2.* A second reason may be taken from God's proportionable proceedings in his courses of justice and mercy. In his executions of justice and inflictions of punishment, he interprets and accepts desires for the deeds, affections for actions, thoughts for the things done. "Whosoever," saith Christ, "looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. v, 28). In God's interpretation, in the search and judgment of divine justice, he that lusts after a woman in his heart is an adulterer ; and without true and timely repentance shall be so taken and proceeded against at that great

and last day. "Whosoever hateth his brother," saith John, "is a murderer" (1 John iii, 15). A hateful thought of our brother, murders him and spills his blood by the verdict of the blessed Spirit; and a malicious man, at the bar of God, goes for a manslayer. If this, then, be God's manner of proceeding in justice, we may much more confidently expect, nay, with reverent humility challenge (way being made by the mediation of Christ) the same proportionable measure in those his most sweet and lovely inclinations and expressions of mercy. Shall a lewd desire after a woman fall under the axe of God's justice, as if it were the gross act of lust; and shall not a longing desire after grace be graciously embraced in the arms of mercy as the grace itself? Shall an angry thought, invisible, immaterial, hurtful only to the heart which harbours it, be charged with actual bloodshed; and shall not a panting thirst of a broken and bleeding soul after Christ's saving and sanctifying blood be bathed and refreshed in his precious blood? Yes, certainly, and much rather; for "God's tender mercies are over all his works" (Psalm cxlv, 9), and mercy with a holy exultation triumpheth and "rejoiceth against judgment" (James ii, 13). "His mercy is great unto the heavens" (Psalm lvii, 10). He doth with much sweet contentment, and as it were natural propension, incline to the gracious effusions of mercy. "He delighteth in mercy," saith Micah (chap. vii, 18); he is most highly pleased and exalted most gloriously when he is pardoning sins, purging souls, pulling out of the devil's paw, pouring in grace, shining into sad and uncomfortable hearts, saving from hell, &c. This makes him so passionate (in a holy sense) when he hath no passage for his love. (See Deut. v, 29; Psalm lxxxi, 13; Isa. xlviii, 18; Matt. xxiii, 37; Luke xix, 41, 42.) But now on the other side he is hardly drawn, not without much reluctancy, delays, forbearance, and as it were some kind of violence offered by excess of multiplied rebellious provocations, to exercise his justice and to punish for sin. (See 2 Chron. xxxvi, 16; Hos. vi, 4, &c.) It appears from the emphasis of the original in Zeph. ii, 2, that in this respect, in a right and sober sense, God travaileth as it were with anger. When the cry of our sins comes first to heaven, he doth not presently pour upon our heads fire and brimstone, according to our desert; but as loath to enter into judgment with us, he then but begins to conceive, as it were, wrath, which he bears, or rather forbears, full many and many a month; still waiting, when upon our repentance he might "be gracious unto us;" until it come to that ripeness by the fulness and intolerable weight

of our sins that he can possibly bear no longer. And then also, when he is about to be delivered of his justly-conceived and long-forborne vengeance, mark how he goes about it: "Ah!" says he (Isa. i, 24). This aspiration argues a compassionate pang of grief, speaking after the manner of men, to proceed against his own people, though they had provoked him as enemies. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me: my repentings are kindled together" (Hos. xi, 8). When he came against Sodom and Gomorrah, the most prodigiously wicked people that ever the earth bore, what a miracle of mercy was it that he should be brought so low as to say, "I will not destroy it for ten's sake" (Gen. xviii, 32).

So it is, then, that mercy flows naturally and easily from God, and he is most forward and free-hearted in granting pardons and receiving into grace and favour. But justice is ever, as it were, violently with "cart-ropes of iniquity" pulled from him. He is pressed with our sins, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves, before we wring from him the vials of just wrath, and wrest out of his hands the arrows of deserved indignation. That you err not in this point, conceive that both God's mercy and justice are originally and fundamentally, as God himself, infinite; both of the same length, height, breadth, and depth; that is, equally endless, boundless, bottomless, unsearchable. Yet, if we consider the exercise and execution of them amongst the creatures and abroad in the world; mercy, that sweetest attribute and most precious balm to all bruised hearts, doth far surpass and outshine the other though incomparable excellencies of his divine nature, and all the perfections which accompany the greatness of God; as appears Exod. xx, 5, 6; Gen. xviii, 32; Joel ii, 13; Jonah iv, 2; Psalm xxxvi, and ciii; 2 Chron. xxi, 13. His influences and beams of mercy are fairly and plentifully shed into the bosom of every creature, and shine gloriously over all the earth, even from one end of heaven to the other. The whole world is thickly set and richly embroidered as it were with wonderful variety of impressions and passages of his goodness and bounty. In this great volume of nature round about us we may run and read the deep prints and large characters of kindness and love, which his merciful and munificent hand hath left in all places, in every leaf, and page, and line of it. If mercy then be so graciously magnified over all his works, we may more strongly build upon it, that if the hand of justice seize upon a hateful thought as a murderer and stained with

blood, and arraign a lustful thought as guilty of adultery and actual pollution; his arms of mercy will most certainly embrace and accept of a sincere desire of the deed done, of hearty affections for the actions, and of a grieved spirit for the grace it groans for.

Yea, but, may some say, if mercy be so fair a flower in the garland of God's incomprehensible greatness, if it so far excel his other attributes in amiableness amongst his creatures, how comes it to pass that the number of his elect is so small, and the sway of the multitude sink down under the burthen of their iniquities, transgressions, and sins, into the pit of endless perdition? How comes it to pass, that out of the great heap and mass of all mankind, there are made but so few vessels of mercy; and that so many vessels of wrath are justly for their sins filled brim full with the vials of everlasting vengeance? See Matt. vii, 13, 14; and xx, 16.

Some matter of answer to this point (would ye think it?) may be taken even from the schoolmen.

If we consider, first, the inconceivable eminency and invaluable worth of the crown of glory, which doth so far and disproportionably surpass and transcend the common state and condition of our nature. Secondly, the preciousness of the effusion of the blood of the dear and only Son of God for the purchasing of that so glorious a crown. Thirdly, the necessary and inevitable defectibility of the creature. Fourthly, the most free and wilful apostasy of Adam, and in him of all his posterity. Fifthly, the abominable and villanous nature and stain of sin. Why should we not, therefore, rather wonder at the unsearchableness of God's mercy for advancing one soul to that endless bliss in heaven, than repine at the equity of his justice, if he should have suffered all the polluted and sinful sons of Adam to pass from the mass of corruption into which they freely fell of their own accord and cursed choice, through a rebellious life, into the endless miseries of their deserved confusion? Would it not have been a greater marvel to have seen any one clearly convinced and found guilty of that most horrible villany that ever was bred in hell, or heard of in the world (I mean the Popish powder treason), pardoned, than all those desperate assassins to have justly perished in their so abhorred and execrable rebellion? And it is utterly unimaginable, either by man or angel, what a deal of mercy doth flow out of the bowels of God's dearest compassions, through the heart's blood of his only Son, to the washing and salvation but of one soul!

## CHAP. VIII.

The former Principle confirmed by Two more Reasons, and by Authority.

*Reason 3.* A third reason may be taken from its part and interest in the fountain of salvation and rivers of living water. He that thirsts after grace is already entitled to the well of life and fulness of heavenly bliss, by a promise from God's own mouth, in Rev. xxi, 6, "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." In that place, after God himself had confirmed and crowned the truth and certainty of the gloriousness of the holy city, and the happiness of the inhabitants thereof, with a solemn asseveration of his own immutability and everlastingness — "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" — he then notifies and describes the persons to whom the promise and possession of so great and excellent glory doth appertain, and those also which shall be eternally abandoned from the presence of God, and burned in the lake of fire and brimstone for ever.

Inhabitants of heaven elect are: —

1. Humble souls, thirsting after grace, God's favour, and that blessed fountain open to all broken hearts for sin and uncleanness, "I will give to him that is athirst of the well of the water of life freely" (ver. 6).

2. Christ's champions here upon earth against the powers of darkness, and conquerors of their own corruptions. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (ver. 7). But the fearful, &c. are marked out for hell (ver. 8); for all that cursed crew and slaves of sin are overcome of Satan and their own lusts, and so carried away captives into everlasting misery and woe.

Cast not away thy confidence then, poor heart; no, not in the lowest languishings of thy afflicted soul. If thou be able to say sincerely with David (Psalm cxliii), "My soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land;" if thou feel in thy affections a hearty hunger after righteousness, both infused and imputed, as well after power against, as pardon of sin; be assured the well of life stands already wide open unto thee, and in due time thou shalt drink thy fill. Thy soul shall be fully satisfied with the excellencies of Jesus Christ, evangelical joys, "as with marrow and fatness," and thou shalt be abundantly refreshed out of the river of his pleasures.

*Reason 4.* That which Paul tells us in the point of communicating to the necessities of the saints; to wit, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. viii, 12), holds true also in all other services and divine duties; so that we are accepted with the Lord accordingly as we are inwardly affected, although our actions be not answerable to our desires. He that hath a ready and resolved mind to do what he may, would undoubtedly do a great deal more if ability were ministered. God, saith Paul, "worketh both to will and to do." If both be his own works, the desire as well as the deed, he must needs love and like both the one and the other, both in respect of acceptance and reward. David did but conceive a purpose to build God a house, and he rewarded it with the building and establishing of his own house (2 Sam. vii, 16). He did but conceive a purpose to confess his sin, and God's ear was in his heart before David's confession could be in his tongue (Psalm xxxii, 5). To poor beggars that wanted food for themselves, Christ shall say at the last day, Ye have fed me when I was hungry, only in regard of their strong affections if they had had means. The prodigal child, when he was but conceiving a purpose of returning, was prevented by his father first coming to him; nay, running towards him (Luke xv, 20). God will answer us before we call (Isa. lxv, 24); that is, in our purpose of prayer.

Besides scripture and reasons, I add ancient and modern authority; not for any other confirmation, but only to show consent.

"To desire the help of grace is the beginning of grace," saith Austin\*.

"Only thou must will, and God will come of his own accord," saith Basil †.

"He that thirsts, let him thirst more; and he that desires, let him yet desire more abundantly; because, so much as he can desire, so much he shall receive."—Bernard ‡.

"Christ," saith Luther§, "is then truly omnipotent, and then truly reigns in us, when we are so weak that we can scarce give any groan."

Again: "The more we find our unworthiness, and the less we find the promises to belong unto us, the more we must desire them; being assured that this desire doth greatly please God, who desireth and willeth that his grace should be earnestly desired ||."

\* Lib. de Correctione et Gratiá, cap. i.

† Serm. de Penitentia.

‡ De Lectione Evangelica, serm. i.

§ Tom. iv, p. 124.

|| Ibid. p. 300.

“When I have a good desire,” saith Kemnicus\*, “though it doth scarcely show itself in some little and slender sigh, I must be assured that the Spirit of God is present, and worketh his good work.”

“Faith,” saith Ursin †, “in the most holy man in this life, is imperfect and weak; yet, nevertheless, whosoever feels in his heart an earnest desire and striving against his natural doubtings, both can and must assure himself that he is endued with true faith.”

“If thou shalt feel thyself,” saith Rolloc ‡, “to believe in Christ, and that for Christ; or at least, if thou canst not forthwith attain that, if thou feel thyself willing to believe in Christ for Christ, and willing to do all things for God’s sake and sincerely, thou hast certainly a very excellent argument, both of perseverance in faith, and of that faith which shall last for ever.”

“Our faith may be so small and weak,” saith Taffin §, “that it doth not yet bring forth fruits that may be lively felt in us; but if they which feel themselves in such estate desire to have these feelings (namely, of God’s favour and love); if they ask them at God’s hands by prayer, this desire and prayer are testimonies that the Spirit of God is in them, and that they have faith already. For is such a desire a fruit of the flesh or of the Spirit? It is of the Holy Spirit, who bringeth it forth only in such as he dwells in.”

“Is it possible,” saith Hooker ||, speaking of Valentinian the emperor, out of Ambrose, “that he which had purposely the Spirit given him to desire grace, should not receive the grace which that Spirit did desire?”

“Where we cannot do what is enjoined us, God accepteth our will to do, instead of the deed itself ¶.”

“I am troubled with fear that my sins are not pardoned, saith Careless. They are, answered Bradford; for God hath given thee a penitent and believing heart; that is, a heart which desireth to repent and believe. For such a one is taken of him (he accepting the will for the deed) for a penitent and believing heart\*\*.

\* Loc. Com. par. i.

† Catechis.

‡ On John v.

§ In his Marks of God’s Children.

|| Lib. v, sec. lx.

¶ Ibid.

\*\* Acts and Monuments, Bradford’s Letter to Careless.

## CHAP. IX.

By what Marks true Desires of Grace in us may be known.

BEFORE I come to the use of this comfortable point, lest any deceive themselves about it, as the notorious sinner, the mere civil man, and the formal professor may all do very easily, take notice of some marks of this saving desire. It is—

1. Supernatural; for it follows an effectual conviction of sin and co-operation of the spirit of bondage with the preaching and power of the law; for a thorough casting a man down in the sight of the Lord, showing and convincing him to be a sink of sin, abomination, and curse; to be quite undone, lost, and ruined in himself (which preparative work, precedent to the desire I speak of, is itself above nature); whereupon the soul thus enlightened, convinced, and terrified, being happily led unto and looking upon the glorious mystery of the gospel, the excellency and offer of Jesus Christ, the sweetness and freeness of the promises, the heavenly splendour and riches of “the pearl of great price,” doth conceive by the help of the Holy Ghost this desire and vehement longing, which you may then know to be saving, when it is joined with a hearty willingness and unfeigned resolution to sell all, to part with all sin, and to bid adieu for ever to our darling delight. It is not then an effect only of self-love, not an ordinary wish of natural appetite, like Balaam’s (Numb. xxiii, 10); of those who desire to be happy, but are unwilling to be holy; who would gladly be saved, but are loath to be sanctified.

2. It ever springs from a humble, meek, and bruised spirit; very sensible, both of the horror of sin and happiness of pardon; both of its own emptiness and of the fulness in Christ; never to be found in the affections of a self-ignorant, self-confident, unhumiliated pharisee.

3. It must be constant, importunately greedy after supply and satisfaction. Not out of a pang or passion only, or begot by the tempest of some present extremity, like a flash of lightning, and then quite vanishing away when the storm of terror and temptation is over. For if a sincere thirst after Christ be once on foot, and takes root in a heart truly humbled, it never determines or expires in this life or the life to come.

4. It is ever linked and enlivened with a continued and conscientious use and exercise of the means; and draws

from them, by little and little, spiritual strength and vigour, much vital efficacy and increase. Not idle, ignorant, unexercised. It were very vain and absurd to hear a man talk of his desire to live, and yet would neither eat nor drink, nor sleep, nor exercise, nor take physic, nor use those means which are ordinary and necessary for the maintenance of life. It is as fruitless and foolish for any one to pretend a desire of grace after Christ, and to be saved, and yet will not prize and use the faithful ministry, the word preached and read, prayer, meditation, conference, vows, days of humiliation, the use of good company and good books, and all divine ordinances and blessed means appointed and sanctified by God for the procuring and preserving a good spiritual state.

5. It is not a lazy, cold, heartless, indifferent desire, but earnest, eager, vehement, extremely thirsting, as the parched earth for refreshing showers, or the hunted hart for the water-brooks. Never was Ahab more sick for a vineyard; Rachel more ready to die for children; Sisera or Sampson for thirst, than a truly humbled soul after Jesus Christ, after bathing in his blood and hiding itself in his blessed righteousness. This desire deadens the heart to all other desires after earthly things, gold, good-fellowship, pleasures, fashions, even the delights of the bosom sin. All other things are but dross and dung, vanity and vile in respect of that object it hath now found out and affects. As Aaron's rod, managed miraculously by the hand of Divine power, swallowed up all the other rods of Pharaoh's sorcerers, so this spiritual desire, planted in the heart by the Holy Ghost, eats up and devours all other desires and over-eager affections after worldly contentments, as worthless, vain, transitory; as empty clouds, wells without water, comforters of no value. We that deal with afflicted consciences hear many times some expressions of this impatient, violent desire in troubled minds. "I have borne nine children," said one, "with as great pain I think as other women. I would with all my heart bear them over again, and pass again through the same intolerable pangs every day, as long as I live, to be assured of my part in Jesus Christ." Complaining another time that she had no hold of Christ, it was said unto her: But doth not your heart desire and long after him! "Oh!" says she, "I have a husband and children, and many other comforts; I would give them all, and all the good I shall ever see in this world or in the world to come, to have my poor thirsty soul refreshed with that precious blood of his."

6. It is growing from appetite to endeavour, from endea-

your to action ; from action to habit ; from habit to some comfortable perfection and stature in Christ. If it be quite quenched and extinguished when the spiritual anguish and agony is over, or stand at a stay, never transcending the nature of a naked wish, it is to be reputed rootless, heartless, graceless. There are Christians that lie as yet, as it were, struggling in the womb of the church, who, for a time at the least, live spiritually only by grievings and groans, by hearty desires, eager longings, and affectionate stirrings of spirit : there are also babes in Christ ; young men in Christ ; strong men in Christ ; old Christians. A perpetual infancy argues a nullity of sound and saving Christianity. The child that never passeth the stature and state of an infant will prove a monster. He that grows not by the sincere milk of the word is a true changeling, not truly changed. He that rests with contentment upon a desire only of good things, never desired them savingly. But here, lest any tender conscience be unnecessarily troubled, I must confess, it is not so growing as I have said, or not so sensibly, at certain times—as while the pangs of the new-birth are upon us, in times of desertion, temptation, though even then it grows in a holy impatency, restlessness, and longing, which is well-pleasing unto the Father of mercies, and which he accepts graciously until he give more strength.

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## CHAP. X.

Two especial Times wherein the former Principle is to be applied.

THE point thus cleared is very sweet and sovereign ; but so that no carnal man must come near it, no stranger meddle with it, much less swine trample upon it. It is a jewel for the true-hearted Nathanael's wearing alone. Nay, the Christian himself, in the time of his soul's health, height of feeling, and flourishing of his faith, must hold off his hand ; only let him keep it fresh and orient in the cabinet of his memory, as a very rich pearl against the day of spiritual distress. As precious and cordial waters are to be given only in swoonings, faintings, and defection of the spirits ; so this delicious manna is to be ministered specially, and to be made use of in the straits and extremities of the soul, at such times and in such cases as these : In

1. The strugglings of the new-birth.
2. Spiritual desertions.

3. Strong temptations.

4. Extraordinary troubles upon our last bed.

1. When thou art once come so far as I intimated before ; to wit, that after a thorough conviction of sin, and sound humiliation under God's mighty hand, upon a timely and seasonable revelation of the glorious mystery of Christ, his excellencies, invitations, his truth, tender-heartedness (for the desire I speak of is an effect and affection wrought ever immediately by the gospel alone) ; I say, when in this case thine heart is filled with vehement longings after the Lord of life, if thou be able to say with David, " My soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land " (Psalm cxliii, 6) ; if thou feel in thyself a hearty hunger and thirst after the favour of God, that fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and fellowship with Christ, assuredly then the well of life is already opened unto thee by the hand of thy faithful Redeemer, and in due time thou shalt drink thy fill. He that is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the eternal and unchangeable God, hath promised it. And amidst the sorrows of thy trembling heart, and longings of thy thirsty soul, thou mayest even challenge it at his hands with a humble, sober, and zealous confidence. As did that Scottish penitent (George Sprot) a little before his execution. He freely " confessed his fault, to the shame, as he said, of himself, and to the shame of the devil, but to the glory of God. He acknowledged it to be so heinous and horrible, that had he a thousand lives, and could he die ten thousand deaths, he could not make satisfaction. Notwithstanding, said he, Lord, thou hast left me this comfort in thy word, that thou hast said, ' Come unto me all ye that are weary and laden, and I will refresh you.' Lord. I am weary ; Lord, I am heavily laden with my sins, which are innumerable. I am ready to sink, Lord, even to hell, without thou in thy mercy put to thine hand and deliver me. Lord, thou hast promised by thine own word, out of thine own mouth, that thou wilt refresh the weary soul. And with that he thrusts out one of his hands ; and reaching as high as he could, with a louder and a strained voice cried, I challenge thee, Lord, by that word, and by that promise which thou hast made, that thou perform and make it good unto me that call for ease and mercy at thine hands." Proportionably when heavy-heartedness for sin hath so dried up thy bones, and the angry countenance of God so parched thine heart that thy poor soul begins to gasp for grace, as the thirsty land for drops of rain, thou mayest, though dust and ashes, with a holy humility

thus speak unto thy gracious God. O merciful Lord God, thou art Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Thou sayest, It is done, of things that are yet to come, so faithful and true are thy decrees and promises. And thou hast promised by thine own word out of thine own mouth, that "unto him that is athirst, thou wilt give of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. xxi, 6). O Lord, I thirst, I faint, I languish, I long for one drop of mercy. "As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," and after the yearning bowels of thy wonted compassions. Had I now in possession the glory, the wealth, and the pleasures of the whole world; nay, had I ten thousand lives, joyfully would I lay them all down and part with them to have this poor trembling soul of mine received into the bleeding arms of my blessed Redeemer. O Lord, and thou only knowest it, my spirit within me is melted into tears of blood, my heart is shivered into pieces. Out of the very place of dragons and shadow of death do I lift up my thoughts, heavy and sad, before thee; the remembrance of my former vanities and pollutions is sickening to my soul; and it is sorely wounded with the grievous representation thereof. The very flames of hell, Lord! the fury of thy just wrath, the scorplings of mine own conscience, have so wasted and parched mine heart, that my thirst is insatiable. My bowels are hot within me; my desire after Jesus Christ, pardon, and grace, is greedy as the grave; "the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." And, Lord, in thy blessed book thou callest and criest, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c. (Isa. lv, 1). "In that great day of the feast, thou stoodest and criedst with thine own mouth, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John vii, 37). And these are thine own words, those "who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled" (Matt. v, 6). I challenge thee, Lord, in this my extremest thirst after thine own blessed self, and spiritual life in thee, by that word, and by that promise which thou hast made, that thou perform and make it good unto me that lie grovelling in the dust and trembling at thy feet. Oh! open now that promised "well of life;" for I must drink, or else I die.

Here then, and in a word, is thy comfort: in these hungerings and thirstings of the soul, there is as it were the seed of faith, there is something of faith in them, as excellent divines both for learning and holiness do affirm. Howsoever, or in what phrase soever it be expressed, sure I am,

such desires, so qualified as before, shall be fulfilled, satisfied, accomplished, possessed of the well of life; and that is abundant to put the thirsting party into a comfortable and saving state. The words of Scripture are punctual and downright for this. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matt. v, 6). "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John vii, 37). "The Lord heareth the desire of the humble" (Psalm x, 17). "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him" (Psalm cxlv, 19). "The Lord filleth the hungry with good things" (Luke i, 53). "Let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii, 17). "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" &c. (Isa. lv, 1). "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground" (Isa. xlv, 3). These longings and desires, this hunger and thirst, before a sensible apprehension and enjoyment of Christ, arise from a sense of the necessity and want of his blessed person and precious bloodshed, which the afflicted soul now prizeth before ten thousand worlds; and for whose sake is most willing to sell all, and to abandon wholly the devil's service for ever. Those, after a full entrance into the holy path, and joyful grasping of the Lord Jesus in the arms of our faith, arise partly from the former state of unutterable sweetness we found in him; partly from the want of a more full and farther fruition of him, especially when he is departed, in respect of present feeling; as in times of desertion, extraordinary temptation, &c. In the passage that is past I understand the former; in those that follow, the latter.

2. Concerning desertions, I intend a larger and more particular discourse; and therefore I pass by them here.

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## CHAP. XI.

Two other especial Times wherein use is to be made of the former Principle.

3. WE may have recourse for comfort to this precious point in some special temptations of doubtfulness and fear about our spiritual state. When spiritual life is run, as it were, into the root in some particulars, and actual abilities to exercise some graces and discharge some duties are returned

to nothing for the present, but groans, desires, and longings to do as God would have us.

For instance :—

Thou art much afflicted, because thou feelest the spirit of prayer not to stir and work in thee with that life and vigour as it was wont ; but beginnest to languish in the inward man for lack of that vital heat and feeling in the mutual intercourse and commerce between God and thine own soul, which heretofore many times warned thine heart with many sweet refreshings, springing from a comfortable correspondence between thy holy ejaculations and his heavenly inspirations ; between thine humble complaints at the throne of grace and his gracious answers ; nay, it may be, thou throwest down thyself before his seat of mercy in much bitterness of spirit ; and for the time can say little or nothing ; the present dulness and indisposition of thine heart stopping all passages to thy wonted prayers, and damming up, as it were, the ordinary course of thy most blessed heart-ravishing conference with thy God in secret. But tell me true, poor soul, though at such a time, and in such an uncomfortable damp and spiritual deadness, thou feelest not thine heart enabled and enlarged for the present, to pour out itself with accustomed fervency and freedom ; yet doth not that heart of thine with an unutterable thirst and desire long to offer up unto his throne of grace thy suits and sacrifices of prayer and praises with that heartiness and feeling, with all those broken and bleeding affections, which a grieved sense of sin that hangs so fast on, and a holy greediness after pardon, grace, and nearer communion with his heavenly highness, are wont to beget in truly humbled souls ? If so, assure thyself this very desire is a prayer of extraordinary strength, dearness, and acceptation with thy God ;—I say, with that thy merciful Lord God, who is as far more compassionately and lovingly affected to his child, than the kindest father to his dearest beloved Son ; as the infinite love of a tender-hearted God doth surpass the faint affection of a frail and mortal man. Suppose thy dearest child were in great extremity, and should at last grow so low and weak, that it were not able to speak, but only groan and sigh, and cast its eye upon thee, as one from whom alone it looked for help. Would not thine heart melt over thy child a great deal more in that misery than ever before when it was able to express its mind ? I am sure it would. It is just so in the present point : for “like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” Nay, and much more, if we consider the amount and quantity. For look how far God

is higher than man in majesty and greatness, which is with an infinite distance and disproportion; so far doth he pass him in tender-heartedness and mercy. See Isa. lv, 8, 9.

Thou mayest sometimes upon the awakening, illumination, and search of thy conscience after some drowsy repose, and deeper sleep upon the bed of security; some fouler ensnarement and longer abode in some known scandalous sin, after the canker of earthly cares and teeth of worldly mindedness have, ere thou be well aware, with an insensible pleasing consumption eaten too far into the heart of thy zeal and other graces; in the apprehension of some present terror, arising from a more serious and sensible survey of the now abhorred villanies and abominations of thine unregenerate time; or from the grieved remembrance of thy falls and failings; of thy sins and unserviceableness since thy conversion, which I am persuaded trouble the Christian most, and go nearest to his heart, &c. ;—I say, in such cases as these thou mayest feel such a fearfulness and faintness to have surprised the hand of thy faith, that it cannot so presently and easily recover its former hold; nor clasp about the glorious justice and meritorious blood of Christ with that fastness and firmness of assent, with that comfort and confidence, as it was wont. So that for a time thou mayest lie under the torture of a heavy heart, uncheerfulness in all thy ways, and some degree of horror, because thou canst get no better hold-fast. But more is thy fault; for never did dearest father so lovingly entertain into his greedy arms a penitent son, returning from going astray, than our merciful God upon thy renewed humiliation is willing to shine upon thee again with the refreshing beams and blessings of his wonted favour. Yet tell me true, dear heart, though for the present that precious and happy prayer of Paul for the Romans, “The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing” (Rom. xv, 13), be not fulfilled upon thy soul; though thy former joyful feelings be turned into distrustful fears; yet doth not that heavy heart of thine desire far more to be comforted with the presence and pleased face of thy beloved, than crowned with the glory and pleasures of many worlds? Wouldst thou not much rather feel the hand of thy faith fastened again with peace and full persuasion upon the person, passion, and promises of the Lord Jesus, than grasp in thy bodily hand the richest imperial crown that ever sat upon any Cesar’s head? If Satan’s spiteful craft, taking a cruel advantage of thy present dejection of spirit, do not hinder thy trembling heart from telling the truth, I know thou canst not deny this. And then I must

tell thee, these hearty longings and longing desires in the mean time, until God give more strength, be right dear to that tender-hearted Father of thine, who doth infinitely more esteem one groan or sigh from a broken spirit, than "a thousand rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil," and are most precious and piercing to that compassionate heart, that poured out its warmest and dearest blood to purchase the salvation and refresh the sadness of every truly humbled soul. Ground upon it then, and be of good cheer. If thy troubled spirit, filled with the sense of the want of its former sweet and joyful feelings, find in itself a true and hearty longing after the supply of that want; a constant and conscientious pursuit of all holy means for the procurement of that supply, I can assure thee in the word of life and truth, in God's season thou shalt be satisfied. "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry and will save them" (Psalm cxlv, 19). And this blessed promise for the accomplishment of thy desire is as surely thine as the breath in thy body. He must sooner cease to be God, and deny himself, which is more than infinitely impossible and prodigious blasphemy to imagine, than fail in the least circumstance or syllable of all his love and promises of life to any one that heartily loves him. All the sacred sayings in his holy book, and all those promises of salvation, are signed with the hand of truth itself, and sealed with the blood of his beloved Son; and so are far surer than the pillars of the earth, or poles of heaven: for heaven and earth must pass away before any tittle of his word fall unto the ground; and therefore, as he will most certainly pour upon the hairy pate of every one which hates to be reformed all the plagues and curses threatened there, even to the least spark of the flames of hell; and the last drop of the full vials of his infinite, endless, unquenchable wrath; so will he abundantly make good to every upright soul, sincerely thirsting after Jesus Christ, in the best time, all the promised good in his blessed book, and that above all expectation, expression, or imagination.

Fourthly. Thou mayest be in many ways distressed upon thy bed of death.

1. Casting thine eye back upon thy whole life, all thy sins from Adam to that hour, and willing, as thou must now take thy farewell so to take thy fill of repentance; they appear to the eye of thy conscience far more in number, and more ugly than ever before. And no marvel; for being now sequestered for ever from all worldly comforts and company, distractions and diversions, and the clouds of natural fear, raised by the dreadful circumstances of ap-

proaching dissolution, uniting, as it were, and collecting the sight of thy soul, which employments, in the world, commerce among men, and sunshine of outward prosperity, did before too much disperse, dazzle, and divert; they are represented far more to the life, and in their true colours. Whereupon, comparing the poor weak nothingness, as thou now apprehendest, of thy godly sorrow, hatred, and opposition against them, with thy present apprehension of their heinousness, hatefulness, and horrible number, thou beginnest to be dejected, and knowest not well what to think of thyself: I say then for thy comfort, consult with thy sanctified heart, and thou shalt find and feel an infinite hearty desire that thy repentance for them, detestation of them, and heart rising against them, had been, and now were as thorough, sound, and resolute as ever was in any penitent soul that breathed the life of grace upon earth.

2. Revising now thy whole Christian conversation, spending of sabbaths, pouring out prayers, reading scriptures, hearing the word, love of the brethren, days of humiliation, works of mercy, receiving the sacrament, godly conference, living by faith in all estates, &c., thou mayest see them in this last, impartial, clear, retired examination of thy conscience, to have been beset with so many failings, imperfections, deadness of spirit, distractions, distempers, that thou beginnest to fear and conceive thou mightest as well never have entered the Christian course at all as to have made so little progress therein. In this case also reflect upon the holy habitual disposition of thy heart, and thou shalt feel it thirsting and longing unfeignedly that all the holy duties and good deeds that ever passed through thy heart and hands had been done in answerable exactness to the rules of divine truth; and, if it had so pleased God, with absolute freedom from all infirmities.

3. Thou mayest be troubled at that time, because, being perhaps, as yet, but of little standing in profession, thou hast done God so little service; and in that short time hast not stood on God's side with that courage and life, nor walked in his holy ways with that watchfulness and zeal as thou mightest. And it cuts thy heart the more, because thou hast spent so much of thy time in serving thyself and Satan, and expectest now to enjoy immortal joys and a crown of endless bliss. But here is thy comfort—it is the unfeigned desire and resolution of thine heart. If the Lord would be pleased to allow thee a longer time in this life, and add many more years unto it, thou wouldest double thy diligence, and improve all opportunities to do thy God every way far more glorious service than heretofore, all the

days of thine appointed time. Oh! then thou wouldst do so and so!

Assure now thyself in these three cases and troubles upon thy last bed, this sincere desire of thine upright soul will be graciously accepted of our merciful God in the name of Jesus Christ; as though, first, thy repentance had been to the full; secondly, thy obedience to the height; thirdly, thy present promises, vows, and resolutions for future forwardness and fruitfulness performed to the utmost. For when all is done, Jesus Christ is all in all. He alone is the only sanctuary and tower of everlasting safety, for every truly humbled soul to fly unto, both in life and death. He is made unto us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i, 30).

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## SECT. III, PART II.

### CHAP. I.

The First particular Malady set down, with a general Principle for the Cure of it.

I COME NOW, as I promised, to some special cures and particular application of comfortable antidotes to divers spiritual maladies, of which Christians especially complain; to those terrors and temptations which are wont most to afflict sin-troubled and truly humbled souls.

1. I will suppose thou art effectually and savingly wrought upon by the preaching and power of the word; enlightened and convinced to acknowledge and feel thyself to be a most sinful and cursed wretch by nature; lost and forlorn, damned and utterly undone in thyself, &c.; and upon the opening of the glorious mystery of the gospel, and offer therein of the person and precious merits of Jesus Christ, for the present binding up of thy broken heart and endless blessedness, thou art ravished with extraordinary admiration and affection after that "hidden treasure and pearl of great price," holding thyself happy that ever thou wast born, and made for ever if thou canst get possession of it; but a lost man if thou canst not get it, and an everlasting castaway. Most willing therefore art thou to "sell all that thou hast;" prizing it infinitely before the riches, glory, and pleasures of the whole earth. In which state thou hast a strong, direct, and special calling to fill thine hungry soul with Jesus Christ; to lay hold upon his

person, sufferings, promises, and all the rich purchases of his dearest blood as thine own for ever; to take him as thy "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" that so "unspeakable joy, and full of glory," "peace which passeth all understanding," evangelical pleasures, which "neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," might abundantly flow into thine heart from the "fountain of all comfort." But yet so it is, alledging that thou art the unworthiest upon earth, the vilest of men; no heart so hard as thine; thy sins far above ordinary; of an abominable and most abhorred strain; of a scarlet and crimson dye; for thou hast done so and so; sinned many and many a time against that divine, nay and even natural light, which stood in thy conscience like an armed man; persecuted the saints; lived in Sodom; and that which troubles thee most of all, for all these sins thy sorrow is very poor and scant, in no proportion to thy former heinous provocations:—I say upon these, and the like mistaken grounds, thou very unadvisedly professest, but against thine own soul, that as yet thou canst not, thou darest not, thou wilt not meddle with any mercy, apply any promise, or be persuaded that Jesus Christ belongs unto thee. What! such a vile, unworthy, abominable wretch as thou, to expect such glorious things, to come near so pure a God, to lay violent hands upon the Lord of life, and look for everlasting bliss! Alas! say what you will, sayest thou, as yet I cannot, I dare not, I will not. Whereupon thou wilfully, as it were, liest still upon the rack of much spiritual terror and trouble of mind; and, which is a miserable addition and mischief, for which thou mayest thank thyself, art all the while far more liable and liest much more open to Satan's most horrible injections, and cruellest temptations to self-destruction, despair, plunging again into former pleasures of good-fellowship, and the like.

It grieves me to consider how fearfully and falsely thou deceivest thine own heart in a point of so great importance, to thy much spiritual hurt and further horror. Why, this it is which maketh thee most welcome to Jesus Christ; because thou art so sensible of thy spiritual misery and beggary; because thou art so vile, so abominable, so unworthy and wretched in thine own conceit. "Those that be whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mat. ix, 12, 13). And in this respect he is said to "justify the ungodly" (Rom. iv, 5); and to "die for the unjust" (1 Pet. iii, 18); and to seek those that find themselves lost: and

therefore that which thou makest thy greatest discouragement to come unto Christ, should be, and in truth is the greatest encouragement to cast thyself with confidence into the bosom of his love.

But before I come to speak more fully to the point, let me premise this principle :—

When a man is once sincerely humbled under God's mighty hand, with sight of sin and sense of divine wrath ; so that now all his former wicked ways, pollutions, and provocations of God's pure eye, lie so heavy upon his heart, that he is truly weary, willing to be rid of them all, unfeignedly thirsting after the blood and righteousness of Christ ; and therefore as well content to take upon him his sweet and easy yoke, to please him in new obedience for the time to come, as to partake of the merit of his passion for the present pardon of his sins :—I say then he must conceive that he hath a sound, seasonable, and comfortable calling to lay fast hold upon Jesus Christ, and to be undoubtedly persuaded that he hath his part and portion in him. And besides that God's blessed word determines it, he may the rather assent unto it and the more boldly believe it, because he hath now found and feels by his own experience the practice of that double policy of the devil, so often discovered unto him heretofore by God's faithful messengers ; to wit, that whereas he was a long time most industrious to keep his heart resolutely stubborn and unstirred against the might and piercing of the most powerful ministry, and when at any time he once perceived it to begin to work upon him, raised all possible opposition against his yielding ; so now, when he is truly touched indeed and resolute to abandon his hellish slavery for ever, he labours might and main, with all restless cruelty and malice, to keep his conscience continually upon the rack. To this purpose he objects and urges to the utmost the heinousness of his former sins, the fierceness of God's wrath (which he cunningly concealed before), the littleness of his sorrow, his unworthiness to meddle with any promise, and the like. And what is the reason, think you, that he who was so daubing before is now so downright ? he that was so indulgent before is now so desperate, and for nothing but despair and damnation ? It is easy to tell : for that foul fiend knows full well, if a poor soul in the supposed case and such a truly humbled state, shall but come now, when Christ calls him, and “ set to his seal that God is true ” (which not to do shall ever be an unmannerly madness, and wilful cruelty to a man's own conscience), he is then quite gone out of his kingdom of darkness, and an immortal soul is pulled out of his hellish paw for ever. This

is the true reason why he so rageth when he sees a weary soul make towards Jesus Christ for rest. I have often foretold you of Satan's method and malice in managing his temptations in this kind, that being forewarned ye may be fore-armed. He plots first, and prevails with most amongst us, to keep them from terror and trouble for sin: but if they be once happily wounded that way, then his next plot is to allay and take away the smart by outward mirth, or daub and draw over a skin only with unsound and superficial comfort. But if he find that it bleeds still, and will not be stanch'd but only by the blood of Christ, and that no earthly pleasure can any whit assuage the pain; then in the third place doth he cast about and contend with all cruelty to keep the poor soul in a perpetual sad, slavish trembling, that it may not dare to meddle with any comfort, or apply the promises; but cherishing the bruise, against the counsel of the prophets, bleed inwardly still. And this point he plies with more eagerness and fury, because the very next step, to wit, but even reaching out of this spiritual gulf and grief for sin towards the merciful hand of Christ holden out to help him up, is the next and immediate act by which a man is quite and for ever pulled out of his power and put into the paradise of grace.

Or in a word, and shorter, thus:—Though thou comest freshly out of a hell of heinous sins; and hitherto hast neither thought, nor spoke, nor done any thing but abominably; yet if now with true remorse thou groanest under them all, as a heavy burthen, and sincerely longest for the Lord Jesus and newness of life, thou art bound presently, immediately after that act and unfeigned resolution of thy soul, to take Christ himself and all the promises of life as thine own for ever. All delays, demurs, exceptions, objections, pretexts, standing out, scruples, distrusters, and contradictions to the contrary, are dishonourable to God's mercy and free grace, disparagement to the promises, derogatory to the truth and tender-heartedness of Jesus Christ; an unnecessary detainment of the soul in terror, and only a gratification of that roaring lion, whose trade is to tear souls in pieces and torture them all he can. For as soon as we are poor in spirit, we are presently blessed (Mat. v, 3); as soon as we are weary of our sins, the hand of Christ is ready to take off the burthen (Mat. xi, 28); as soon as we thirst in the sense I have said, the "fountain of the water of life" is set wide open unto us (Rev. xxi, 6); as soon as we have got "contrite and humble spirits," we become royal thrones for "the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" to dwell in for ever (Isa. lvii, 15).

## CHAP. II.

The first particular argument to be applied for the Cure of the former Malady.

AND now come and take abundantly mighty arguments and invincible motives, which neither man, nor devil, nor natural distrust can ever any ways possibly disable; not to lie any longer, being in the supposed state, upon the rack of terror; but to lay hold upon the rock of eternity. I mean, to rest and establish thy trembling heart upon the Lord Jesus with everlasting peace and safety; and afterwards to walk watchfully and fruitfully in the holy way until thine ending hour.

1. And first take notice, that Jesus Christ, God blessed for ever, keeps an open house for all such hungry and thirsty souls. "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii, 17). "Whosoever will;" in whose heart soever the Holy Ghost hath wrought an effectual, earnest, hearty will; that supernatural sincere desire described before, which prizeth the "well of life" before the whole world, and is ever accompanied with an unfeigned resolution to sell all for the pearl of great price; I say, such a one may come and welcome, and that without bidding, and drink his fill of the river of all spiritual pleasures. If there were no more but this, this is more than enough to bring thee to Jesus Christ. If a proclamation should be made, that such or such a great man kept open house for all comers, there need no more to bring in all the poor hungry people in the country, without any further waiting or inviting. But here, above all degress of comparison, the hunger is more importunate and important; the feast-maker more faithful and sure of his word; the fare more delicious and ravishing. And why dost thou refuse? Thou hast a warrant, infinitely above all exception. The Lord of life keeps open house for all that *will* come; and thou knowest in thine own conscience, and canst not deny but that he hath already honoured thee with that singular favour as to plant in thy soul a *will* this way, and that most earnestly. For what wouldst thou not part with to have assurance of thy part in Jesus Christ? What wouldst thou not give, if it might be bought, to hear him speak peace unto thy soul, and say sweetly unto it, "I am thy salvation?" And therefore if thou come not in presently, and take the comfort of this precious place and promise, "setting to thy

seal that God is true," consider by the foregoing view of thy case, whether thy terrors and temptations be not justly upon thee until thou dost.

2. If this will not serve (which God forbid), then in a second place thou art invited solemnly by the feast-maker, as it were, himself, with his own mouth, which is an infinite mercy, honour, and comfort: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat. xi, 28). Here is no exception of sins, times, or persons. And if thou shouldst reply, Yea, but alas! I am the unworthiest man in the world to draw near unto so holy a God; to press into so pure a presence; to expect upon the sudden such glorious, spiritual, and heavenly advancement; most impure, abominable, and vile wretch that I am! readier far and fitter to sink into the bottom of hell by the insupportable weight of my manifold heinous sins:—I say then the text tells thee plainly, that thou mightily mistakest; for therefore only art thou fit, because thou feelest so sensibly thy unfitness, unworthiness, vileness, wretchedness. The sorer and heavier thy burthen is, the rather shouldst thou come. In a word, it appears by thine own words expressing such a penitent apprehension of thy spiritual poverty, that thou art the only man, and such as thou alone, which Christ here specially aims at, invites, and accepts.

3. "He knowing our frame," our sluggish, dull, and heavy disposition, our spiritual laziness, natural neglect of our own salvation, and loathness to believe; adds in another place to ordinary invitation, a stirring, compassionate, and quickening compellation, or rather exclamation. "Ho!" saith he, Isaiah lv, 1, "every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c. And lest any think he shall come to his cost, or shall bring any thing in his hand, he calls upon "him that hath no money;" and thus doubles his cry: "Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." O most blessed and sweetest lines! So full of love and longing to draw us to the well of life, that besides that holy pang of compassion and excitation, "Ho!" he cries thrice, "Come, come, come!" Yea, but, mayest thou say, alas! I am so far from bringing any thing in my hand, that I bring a world of wickedness upon my heart; and that above ordinary, both in notoriousness and number; and therefore I am afraid the heinousness of my sins will hinder my acceptance, though the invitation be most sweet and precious. Be it so; yet the Spirit of God in the same chapter doth purposely meet with and remove that very scruple: "Let the wicked, saith

he, "forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts" (and this is thy case; thou art unfeignedly set against all sin, both inward and outward), "and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (ver. 7). He will not only have mercy upon thee, but he will also *abundantly* pardon. He will *multiply* his pardons according to thy provocations, and that with superabundance (Rom. v, 20).

4. If all this will not yet do, he descends, out of the infinite riches of his grace, to a miracle of further mercy. For the mighty Lord of heaven and earth sends ambassadors unto us, dust and ashes, worms and no men, to beseech us to be reconciled unto him. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God" (2 Cor. v, 20). What man can possibly ponder seriously upon this place, but must be transported with extraordinary admiration; nay, adoration of the bottomless depth and infinite height of God's incomprehensible, everlasting, and free love! We most abhorred, vile wretches, are the offenders, traitors, rebels, and enemies, and ought to seek and sue unto him first upon the knees of our souls, trembling in the dust, and, if it were possible, with tears of blood. And yet he begins unto us, entreating us by his own Son, and his servants, the ministers, to come in, accept his favour and grace, enter into the wise and good way, which is precious, profitable, honourable, and pleasant; that he may hereafter set upon our heads everlasting crowns of glory and bliss. An earthly prince would disdain and hold it in foul scorn to send unto his inferior for reconcilement, especially who had behaved himself basely and unworthily towards him, and justly provoked his royal indignation. It is thus indeed with worms of the earth, "in whom there is no help," and whose breath is in their nostrils. But it is otherwise with the King of kings, "who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, and the nations as the drop of a bucket; who bringeth the princes to nothing, and maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." He is content to put up at our hands this indignity and affront, if I may so speak. He is glad to sue unto us first, and send his ambassadors day after day, beseeching us to be reconciled unto him. O incomprehensible depth of unspeakable mercy and encouragement to come in and trust in his mercy in case of spiritual misery, able to trample under foot triumphantly all oppositions of the most raging hell or distrustful heart!

5. Nay, he commands us; "and this is his command-

ment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John iii, 23). This command alone of the All-powerful God should infinitely outweigh and prevail against all other countermands of heaven or earth, flesh and blood, Satan, nature, reason, sense, the whole creation, all the world. It should swallow up all scruples, doubts, fears, despairs. Coming to Jesus Christ with broken hearts according to this commandment, it will bear us out against all oppositions, accusations, weaknesses of faith, in the evil times, in the hour of temptation, upon our beds of death, at the last and greatest day. It will be a plea at such times utterly above all exception, against all allegations, terrors, and temptations to the contrary, to say, I was humbled under the burthen of sin and sense of my spiritual misery. God in mercy offered me his Son Jesus Christ freely in the mystery of the gospel by the ministry of the word. I thereupon thirsted infinitely for his person and precious blood, that I might thereby obtain pardon and power against my sins. He called upon me and commanded me to drink my fill of the water of life freely. I accepted his gracious offer, and according to his commandment cast myself upon the Lord Christ against all the contradictions of carnal reason and sophistry of Satan; and since that time he hath given me power to serve him in sincerity of heart. This is my ground and warrant, even the commandment of my blessed God, thus to drink when I was thirsty; against which the gates of hell can never possibly prevail. In thy case then, who thirstest extremely, and upon free offer yet refuseth to drink, consider how unworthily thou dishonourest God and wrongest thine own soul; by suffering the devil's cavils and the groundless exceptions of thine own distrustful heart to prevail with thee against the direct command of Almighty God, which thou oughtest to obey against all reason, sense, fears, doubts, despairs, and hellish suggestions. Abraham, the father of the faithful, did readily and willingly submit to God's commandment, even to kill his own only dear son with his own hand, naturally, matter of a great grief as could possibly pierce the heart of a mortal man. And wilt thou, being broken-hearted, stand off from believing, and refuse when he commands thee to take his own only dear Son; especially since thou takest with him the excellency and variety of all blessings both of heaven and earth; a discharge from every moment of the everlasting pains of hell; deeds sealed with his own blood, of thy right to the glorious inheritance of the saints in light? In a word, even all things, the most glorious Deity itself blessed for ever, to be enjoyed through him, with unspeakable and endless

pleasure through all eternity ! Prodigious madness ! cruelty to thine own soul ; or something at which heaven and earth, man and angel, and all creatures may stand amazed, that thou shouldst so wickedly and wilfully “ forsake thine own mercy,” and “ neglect so great salvation.”

6. Lastly, lest he should let pass any means, or be any ways wanting on his part to drive us to Christ, and settle our souls upon him with sure and everlasting confidence, he also threateneth : “ And to whom swear he, that they should not enter into his rest ; but to them that believed not ? ” (Heb. iii, 18.) Wherein he expresseth extremest anger, unquenchable and implacable indignation. He swears in his wrath that no unbeliever shall ever enter into his rest. In the threats of the moral law there is no such oath, but a secret reservation of mercy upon the satisfaction of divine justice some other way. But herein the Lord is peremptory, and a third way shall never be found or afforded the sons of men. Neglect of such a gracious offer of so great salvation, must needs provoke and incense so great a God extraordinarily : for with prodigious ingratitude and folly it slings as it were God’s free grace in his face again, and sins against his mercy. Suppose a mighty prince, passing by all the royal and noble blood in Christendom, many brave and honourable ladies, should send to a poor maid, bred in a base cottage, born both of beggarly and wicked parents, offer her marriage, and to make her a princess ; and she then should foolishly refuse and reject so infinitely undeserved and unexpected advancement. As she might thereupon be justly branded for a notorious maniac ; so would not so great a prince, think you, be mightily enraged at such a dunghill indignity and peevish affront ? The Prince of peace, upon whose thigh is written “ King of kings, and Lord of lords,” passing by more excellent and noble creatures, sends unto thee, whose “ father is corruption and the worm thy mother and thy sister,” and who in respect of thy spiritual state liest “ polluted in thine own blood,” and offers to “ betroth thee unto himself in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in tender mercies ” (Hos. ii, 19) ; to crown thee with all the riches both of his kingdom of grace and glory. Now if thou shouldst stand off (which God forbid !) as thereupon out of perfection of madness thou forsakest thine own salvation, so thou most justly enforcest that blessed Lord to swear in his wrath that thou shalt never be saved.

Thus thou hast heard how, first, he keeps open house to all such hungry and thirsty souls (Rev. xxii, 17) ; secondly, he invites (Mat. xi, 28) ; thirdly, invites with an awakening

and rousing compellation (Isa. lv, 1); fourthly, entreats (2 Cor. v, 26); fifthly, commands (1 John iii, 23); sixthly, and threatens (Heb. iii, 18). How cruel then is that man to his own wounded conscience, who in his extreme spiritual thirst will not be drawn by this sixfold merciful cord to drink his fill of the fountain of the water of life; to cast himself with confidence and comfort into the arms of the Lord Jesus, which is more than infinitely able to tie the most trembling heart, and that which hangs off most by reason of pretended doubts, scruples, and distrusts, to that blessed Saviour of his with all full assurance and perfect peace! How is it possible but that all, or some of these should bring in every broken heart to believe; and cause every one that is weary of his sins to rely upon the Lord of life for everlasting welfare!

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### CHAP. III.

The Second particular Argument to be used for the Cure of the Former Malady. Five Parts of that Argument laid open. The First Branch of the Fifth Part.

BUT that which I desire principally to press for my purpose in the point at this time, is this: Thy conscience is now awakened, terrified, and troubled, and therefore, as I suppose, tender and very sensible, at least for a time, of the least sin. Every sin lies now upon thy soul as heavy as a mountain of lead; and therefore thou wouldst not willingly add unto thy already insupportable burthen any more weight. All thy youthful lusts and abominations stare in the face of thy conscience with grisly and horrible looks; and therefore, for the present especially, thou art notably scared from a willing provocation of God's anger and wounding it afresh with a new sin. Well, it being thus then, if it appear unto thee, that by thy standing off, in the case I have supposed thee, from taking Christ as thine own, applying the promises as most certainly belonging unto thee, and so "setting to thy seal that God is true," thou dishonourest him extraordinarily in many respects. Methinks then thou shouldst be mightily moved, without any more ado, to cast thyself presently upon the Lord Jesus with comfort and much assurance; especially since thy so yielding to the law of faith is for thy infinite good. And assure thyself thou offendest in the mean time many ways.

1. By a sour and self-willed unmannerliness towards

Christ in not coming when he calls thee, Mat. xi, 28. "It is pride, and high pride," saith a worthy divine\*, "not to come when thou art called. It is rudeness, and not good manners, not to do as thou art bidden to do; yea, so often and earnestly charged to do." It would be a foul fault and unmannerly disobedience for any subject in this kingdom, though never so ragged and tattered, or pretending never so much his unfitness and unfineness to press into so great a presence, not to come unto the king, if he should please earnestly to call upon him. Disobedience to the law of faith and rejecting God's gracious offer of his Son freely, is the greatest, and an inexpiable sin. He hath sworn in his wrath that such as thus refuse shall never enter into his rest.

2. By a saucy prescribing unto him upon what terms he shall take thee. "Ho!" says he, "every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price" (Isa. lv, 1). Nay, sayest thou, I will either bring something in mine hand, or I will have none. Whereas it appears in the cited place, that Christ calls not only those that are "thirsty," but also such as "have no money."

3. By undervaluing the invaluable worth of his precious blood, as though thy sins had exceeded the price that hath been paid for them. Whereas it is called, Acts xx, 28, God's own blood; and therefore no want in it to wash away any sin, and for ever.

4. By offering disparagement to all the promises in God's blessed book; every one whereof doth now sweetly and upon good ground invite thee, as it were, to repose upon it as upon a sure word of God with everlasting rest and safety. But thou, giving too much way to the devil's lies, and the dictates of thine own distrustful heart, keepest off and retirest, as though they were too weak to support thy now troubled and trembling soul, especially laden with so many and heinous sins. Whereby consider how great indignity thou offerest to such promises and places as these, Isa. i, 18; Ezek. xxxvi, 25; Isa. lv, 7, 8, 9; and lvii, 15. Especially being so strongly backed by God's blessed oath: "God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before

\* Ward, in his *Life of Faith*.

us" (Heb. vi, 17, 18). What a mighty strength may that most glorious speech of our all-merciful God infuse into our faith, Ezek. xxxiii, 11, "As I live," &c.; as if he should have said, As sure as I am the true, eternal, living, and omnipotent God, &c. so certainly "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" but I have pleasure that he should come in, take my Son, and be my servant. Understand the same proportionably of every promise. As sure as I have an eternal essence and being of a Godhead, &c.; so certainly will I give freely to every one, that is truly weary of all his sins, and thirsts unfeignedly for mercy and grace, eternal rest and refreshing in the ever-springing fountain of all spiritual and heavenly pleasures: and so of the rest.

In a word, what an unworthy thing is this; that all the precious promises in the book of God, confirmed with his own oath and sealed with his Son's blood, should suffer dishonour and disparagement, as it were, by thy distrust. As if so many mighty rocks of mercy and truth were not able to sustain a poor bruised reed!

5. By disabling and dishonouring —

(1.) God's free love. See Hos. xiv, 4; Jer. xxxi, 3; Ezek. xvi; Deut. vii, 7, 8; John iii, 16; Ephes. i, 5.

If God would not give us Christ without some matter and motives in us, without something done by ourselves first, it were something to stand out in such a case. But he gives him most freely, without any respect or expectation at all of any precedent work or worth on our part. Only there is required a predisposition in the party to take Christ, legal dejection, sight, sense, and burthen of sin; we must be truly wounded, sensible of the devil's yoke, feel our own misery; we must prize him above, and thirst for him more than the whole world (See Luke iv, 18). A man will not seriously seek after a physician before he feel himself to be sick; for ease, before he be pressed with the weight of his burthen; for a plaister, before he be wounded; for heavenly riches, before he be sensible of his spiritual beggary; for enlargement and pardon, before he find himself in prison; for mercy, before he smart with sense of his misery. Such dispositions, then, as these, serve only to drive us unto Christ, and to let us see and feel a necessity of him; but they are infinitely impossible by any worthiness to draw on Christ. He is a "gift" (Rom. v, 16; John iii, 16), and what is freer than gift? Nothing is required at our hands for receiving him, but empty-handedness and sensibleness of our own nothingness. Our heavenly Father never did, nor ever will sell his Son unto any one that will needs be

something in himself. He ever did, and ever will give him to every poor soul that is vile in his own eyes, nothing in himself; "labours and is heavy laden," and willing to take him as a Saviour and a Lord. A full hand can hold nothing. Either it must be empty, or we cannot receive Christ. First thirst, and then "buy without money and without price."

Methinks Chrysostom doth somewhere set out sweetly the admirable and adored frankness of this Divine bounty:— "If thou wilt be adorned with my comeliness, or be armed with my weapons, or put on my garments, or be fed with my dainties, or finish my journey, or come into that city whose builder and maker I am, or build a house in my country, thou mayest so do all these things, that I will not only not exact of thee any price or payment for any of these things, but I myself would be a debtor unto thee of a great reward, so that thou wouldst not disdain to use my things, my strength, gifts, graces. What can be ever found equal to this bounty\*."

If God, then, be so infinitely good as to offer his Son so freely; and thou so fitted to receive him by sensibleness of thy spiritual misery, thirsting for his blood, resolving upon his service for the time to come, &c.; how unadvisedly cruel art thou to thine own conscience, and how beyond measure proud, that wilt needs stand off still from taking the Lord Jesus; and suffer still thy poor trembling soul to lie unnecessarily upon the rack of terror? Since thou gettest and gainest nothing thereby; but first, God's dishonour; secondly, thine own wilful torture; thirdly, gratification of Satan's malicious cruelty.

*Object.* 1. But were it not fitter for me, mayest thou say, first to amend my life; to do some good works; to have experience of the change of my conversation; to grieve legally longer, before I be so bold as to lay hold upon Christ, and apply the promises?

*Answer.* Thou must first be alive before thou canst work. Thou must have spiritual ability inspired before thou canst walk in the "good way;" thou must be justified before thou be sanctified. Now spiritual life is only then, and never before or by any other means infused, but when we reach out an empty hand, and take Jesus Christ into our humbled souls. When a poor soul weary of all sin, according to his call, commandment, and counsel, rolls itself as it were and leans upon the Lord Jesus, then is spiritual life first breathed into it. The vital operations of grace in all holy duties, good deeds, amendment of life, holy walking,

\* On Mat. xxiv, hom. 77.

universal obedience, must appear afterward. Zaccheus received Jesus Christ first into his heart and house, before he was able to restore and distribute. Casting ourselves upon the Lord of life with truth of heart, as our only jewel and joy we have in heaven or in earth, with whom we are resolved to live and die, draws from him into our souls that heavenly virtue and vigour, whereby we are afterward enabled to exercise all the functions of spiritual life, and to die to the world and all worldly pleasures for ever. Herein is thy fault and failing: thou conceivest not aright of God's free grace; but thinkest thou shalt not be welcome, except thou comest with thy cost. Whereas God ever gives his Son freely, and bids thee come and welcome, and "buy without money, and without price."

*Object. 2.* But will it not be presumption in me, having no good thing in me at all to bring with me, but coming now as it were fresh out of hell, from a most wicked, impure, abominable life, to take Christ as mine own, and all those rich and precious promises sealed with his blood?

*Answer.* Enough hath been already said to meet with this objection. It is not presumption, but good manners, to come when thou art called. How can he be said to presume, who is both invited and entreated, commanded and threatened to come in? Of which see before. Thou must now, in this extreme spiritual thirst of thine, drink of the water of life so freely offered, that thou mayest receive some heavenly strength to be good, and "power to become the son of God" (John i, 12). Thou must throw thy sinful soul upon Jesus Christ, bleeding and breathing out his last upon the cross (as the body of the Shunamite's child was applied to the prophet, who stretched himself upon it), that thou mayest thereby be quickened with desired fruitfulness, filled by little and little with "all the fulness of God" (Ephes. iii, 19); receiving "grace for grace" (John i, 16); "I am the resurrection and the life," saith Christ; "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John xi, 25).

It were execrable presumption for any man who purposeth to go on in the willing practice or allowance of any one known sin, to believe that Christ is his righteousness and sanctification. But, where all sin is a burthen, every promise as a world of gold, and the heart sincere for a new way, there a man may be bold. For thee to have pretended part in Christ, wallowing yet in thy sins, had been horrible presumption indeed; and for me to have applied the promises and preached peace unto thy remorseless conscience before the pangs of the new birth had seized upon

thee, had been the vilest daubing. But in the case I now suppose, it is both seasonable and surely grounded for me to assure thee of acceptation and pardon, and for thee to receive Jesus Christ without any more ado into the arms of thy humble soul.

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#### CHAP. IV.

Two Branches more of the Fifth Part of the former Argument, and the several Particles which belong to the Second of them.

(2.) HIS sweet name (Exod. xxxiv, 6, 7), wherein is answered whatsoever may any ways be pretended for standing out in this case, as appears fully before, chap. iii, p. 240.

(3.) His glorious attributes.

1st. His truth. He that believeth hath set to his seal that God is true (John iii, 33). He that labours and is heavy laden with the burthen of sin, comes to Christ for ease when he is called, takes him for his Saviour and his Lord, and thereupon grounds a resolute, unshaken, and everlasting confidence, that he is his for ever, puts to his seal that Christ is true, that his precious promise, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat. xi, 28), is inviolable. Whereby Christ Jesus, blessed for ever, is mightily honoured, his truth glorified, and thine own soul with extraordinary blessedness everlastingly enlivened. But he now that retires in this case and holds off, makes him who is truth itself a liar. "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar" (1 John v, 10).

Now what a fearful indignity is this against the Lord God of truth! We see too often how miserable mortal men, worms of the earth, take such an affront at the hands one of another; for many times for the lie given them they throw themselves desperately upon the irrecoverable ruin of their lives, estates, souls, and posterity, by challenging and killing each other; which dishonour to the mighty Lord of heaven and earth is the greater, and is much aggravated by the infinite infallibility of the promises. For besides his word, which were more than immeasurably sufficient, he hath added a most solemn oath for our sakes, that we might have greater assurance and stronger consolation.

2d. His mercy, most directly and specially. And to say nothing of the freeness of his mercy, which springs only out of the riches of his infinite bounty, and "the good pleasure

of his will ;” of his readiness to forgive, otherwise the death of Christ should be of none effect, his blood shed in vain, the greatest work lost that ever was done ; of his “delight in mercy,” Micah vii, 18 (Mercy in man is a quality, in God it is his nature and essence. Now what we do naturally we do willingly, readily, unweariedly. As the eye is not weary of seeing, the ear with hearing, &c. A bee gives honey naturally, never stings but when provoked. When God is angry, it is but as it were by accident, upon occasion, drawn unto it by the violent importunity of our multiplied provocations ; but he delights in mercy, &c.)—I say, to say nothing of these, this one consideration may convince us of extreme folly in refusing mercy in such a case, notwithstanding the heinousness or number of our sins ; to wit, that no sins, either for number or notoriousness, in a truly broken heart, can make so much resistance to God’s infinite mercies, as the least spark of fire could make to the whole sea, and that is little enough. Nay, as infinitely less as an infinite thing exceeds a finite ; between which there is no proportion.

3d. His power. For thou art very likely thus or in the like manner to reason with thyself, and cavil cruelly against thine own soul. Alas ! what talk you of taking Christ, the promises of life, and heavenly lightsomeness ; my poor heart is as dark as the very middle of hell ; much harder than a rock of adamant ; as cold and dead as the senseless centre of the earth ; as uncomfortable and restless almost as desperation itself. It is more than infinitely impossible that such a dark, hard, dead, comfortless thing should ever be enlightened, softened, quickened, and established with joy, &c.

But mark how herein thou unadvisedly undervaluest and unworthily settest bounds to the unlimited power of God. Whereas thou shouldest imitate Abraham, the father of all them that believe, who “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief ; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God ; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform” (Rom. iv, 20, 21).

Be advised in this case :

[1.] To compare these two things together : “the making of the seven stars and Orion, and turning the shadow of death into the morning ;” and the infusion of heavenly light into thy dark and heavy heart. And dost thou not think that the second is as easy as the first to the same omnipotent hand ? Nay, it is easier in our own apprehension (to the Divine Majesty nothing is difficult or uneasy). For those glorious shining constellations were created of nothing ;

and nothing hath no disposition to any being at all, much less to any particular existence; but a soul sensible and weary of its spiritual darkness is in the nearest and most immediate passive disposition, if I may so speak, to receive the whole sun of righteousness. Reach but out thy hand in this case to Jesus Christ offering himself freely unto thee as a Saviour and Lord, and thou shalt presently take possession of the kingdom of grace, and undoubted right to the everlasting kingdom of glory. The prophet (Amos v, 8) presseth this argument of power for some such purpose; and it may serve excellently against all pretences and counter-pleas, for a supposed impossibility of being enlightened and refreshed in the depth of spiritual darkness and distress. It may be thou mayest say unto me, You advise me indeed to seek God's face and favour; but, alas! mine is not an ordinary heart, it is so full of guilty sadness and horror for sin, that I have little hope. Yea, but consider, He that I counsel thee to seek, "made the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning;" and will do far greater wonders for thy soul if thou wilt "believe the prophets that thou mayest prosper." If thou wilt trust in him, he will quickly turn the tumultuous roarings of thy conscience into perfect peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. xxvi, 3). The prophet, therefore, to prevent all scruples and exceptions in this kind, calls upon them thus: "Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion," &c.

[2.] Lay these two together: "To bring honey out of the rock and oil out of the flinty rock" (Deut. xxxii, 13); and to mollify thine heart, even to thine own heart's desire; in which there is already some softness, else thou couldst not sensibly and sincerely complain of its hardness. And thou must needs acknowledge that they are both equally easy to the same Almighty arm.

[3.] Thou mayest well consider that it is a far greater work "to make heaven and earth," than to put spiritual life and lightsomeness into thy truly humbled and thirsty soul, to which so many precious promises are made. And He, with whom thou hast to do, and from whom thou expectest help, is He "that made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; which keepeth truth for ever" (Psalm cxlvi, 6); which openeth the eyes of the blind, and raiseth them that are bowed down; "which healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds; who taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy" (Psalm cxlvii, 3, 11).

[4.] In such an extremity of helplessness and hopelessness, in this trembling and terror of thy heart, thou shouldst call to mind for thy comfort, that "he who establisheth all the ends of the earth" (Prov. xxx, 4) and hath "hung" that mighty and massive body "upon nothing" (Job xxvi, 7), can most easily stay and stablish the most forlorn and forsaken soul, even sinking into the mouth of despair. He that said at first to the earth, Stand still upon nothing, and it never stirred out of its place since the creation, can easily uphold, fortify, and refresh thine heart in the depth of the most grievous spiritual misery; even when in the bitterness of thy spirit thou criest, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord" (Lament. iii, 18).

4th. Even his justice. Christ's blood is already paid as a price for the pardon of the sins of thine humbled soul, and thou wilt needs pay it over again, or else thou wilt not enter upon the purchase: as though God did expect and exact the discharge of the same debt twice, which to imagine, were a monstrous intolerable indignity to the most just God. You know full well what we should think of that man, who having a debt fully discharged by the surety, should press upon the principal for the payment of the same again. We should indeed think him to be a very cruel, hard-hearted, and merciless man; we should call him a Turk, a cut-throat, a cannibal, far fitter to lodge in a den of tigers than to live in the society of men. What a fearful dishonour then is it to the merciful and mighty Lord of heaven and earth, to the righteous Judge of all the world, to conceive, that having received an exact and full satisfaction for all our sins, by the heart's blood of his own dear Son, he should ever require them again at our hands! Far be it then from every one, who would not offer extraordinary disparagement even to God's glorious justice, to entertain any such thought, especially since we have his word, his oath, and the seal of his Son's blood for security. And assuredly we may build upon it, as upon a rock of eternal truth; that when we come unto Christ, weary of all our sins, thirsting sincerely for him, and throwing ourselves upon him, as salvation itself, resolved to take upon us his sweet and easy yoke for the time to come, he doth presently, as he hath promised, take off the burthen, and free us everlastingly from the guilt and stain, condemnation and reign of all our sins.

But now if thou wilt cast thyself upon Jesus Christ, roll thyself upon the promises, being so humbled, spiritually thirsty, and resolved, as thou hast said and I supposed at

the first (for we who are God's messengers, comfort and assure of pardon in such cases, only upon supposition, that the heart and speeches, all the promises and protestations of the party and patient we deal with, be sincere every way) ; I say, if thou thus cast thyself upon the Lord Jesus and the promises of life, having a well-grounded, strong, and seasonable calling thereunto, being, as appears before, invited, entreated, commanded, &c. the case will be blessedly altered. Thou shalt now do as God would have thee ; and mightily honour the invaluable and infinite dignity of his Son's passion and blood, the precious freeness of all the promises, his free love, sweet name, truth, mercy, power, justice, &c. ; thou shalt also cut off and defeat the devil's present fiery darts and projects of further cruelty ; disentangle and unwind thyself out of the irksome maze of restless terrors and trouble of mind ; crown thine own soul in the mean time " with peace that passeth all understanding, with joy unspeakable and full of glory " (Philip. iv, 7 ; and 1 Pet. i, 8) ; with evangelical pleasures, such as " neither eye hath seen, ear heard, or have entered into the heart of man " (1 Cor. ii, 9) ; and hereafter be most certainly received by that sweetest Redeemer of thine into those glorious mansions above, where nothing but light and blessed immortality, no shadow for matter of tears, discontentments, griefs, and uncomfortable passions to work upon ; but all joy, tranquillity, and peace, even for ever and ever, doth dwell.

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## CHAP. V.

The second Malady of Conscience. Three Considerations against Unsoundness, proposed for the Cure of this Malady ; and Three more against Unadvisedness.

YEA, but, may another say, I, in the case proposed, have cast myself, according to your counsel, upon Jesus Christ ; and there by the mercy of God am I resolved to stick, come what will ; and yet no comfort comes. What should I think of myself in this case ?

I think in such a case it may be convenient, and that such an one hath thereupon some cause and calling seriously and impartially to search and try his spiritual state. For which purpose, ponder seriously upon such considerations as these ; some of which may discover unsoundness, others unadvisedness.

1. It may be the party is not yet come in truth to that

sound humiliation, contrition, spiritual thirsting, resolution to sell all, &c., required by the reverend Author quoted before\* : but only hath passed over them overtly, not soundly ; superficially, not sincerely ; and then no marvel though no true and real comfort come. Inform thyself further in this point, that thou mayest more fully know my meaning in it, and be guided aright in a matter of so great weight †.

2. Or it may be, howsoever he protest otherwise, and for all his partial legal terror and trouble of mind, his deceitful heart may still secretly harbour and hanker after some sweet sin, as pride, revenge, strange fashions, worldliness, lust, plays, gaming, good-fellowship, as it is called, &c. ; from which it doth not heartily yield, resolve, and endeavour to make an utter and final cessation and divorce. And assuredly that false heart which regards and allows any wickedness in itself, howsoever it may be deluded with some Anabaptistical flashes, yet shall never be truly refreshed with "joy in the Holy Ghost."

3. It may be, though there were some probable and plausible shows that the party was principally cast down and affected with the heavy weight of sin and horror of God's wrath for it ; yet the true predominant cause of his heaviness, heart's grief, and bitterest complaint, was some secret earthly discontentment, the restless biting of some worldly sting : and in such cases, remove this, and you remove his pains ; comfort him about his cross, and you set him where he was ; and therefore, as in all this he continues a mere stranger in affection to the sweetness, amiableness, and excellency of Jesus Christ, so it is impossible that he should be acquainted with any sound spiritual comfort.

But I will suppose all to be sincere and as it should be ; let me advise thee then to take notice of thine own unadvisedness.

(1.) Thou art perhaps so full of the want of feeling, such a stranger to so much expected and desired joy and peace in believing, and by consequence so drowned in the unnecessary distractions and distempers of a sad heart, that thou utterly forgettest to give thanks and magnify God's singular and incomprehensible mercy for enlightening, convincing, and terrifying thy conscience, offering his Son, raising in thine heart an insatiable thirst after him, and giving thee spiritual ability to rest thy weary soul upon him ; and who knows not that unthankfulness keeps many good things from us, and is an unhappy block in the way to

\* Rogers of Dedham, on Faith.

† Ibid. cap. ii, and v.

intercept and hinder the comfortable influence and current of God's favours and mercies from being showered down so frankly and plentifully upon his people? And he is more likely to be the more provoked in this case, because thou sufferest thine heart to be locked up and thy tongue tied, by Satan's cunning and cruel malice, from praising the glory of God's free grace, for such a work of wonder; I mean that mighty change of thine from nature to grace, in extolling of which, were all the hearts and tongues of all the men and angels in heaven and earth set on work industriously through all eternity, they would still come infinitely short of that which is due and deserved.

(2.) Or it may be, when some one of a thousand, upon thy complaint that no comfort comes, doth seriously labour to settle thine heart in peace, pressing upon thee for that purpose invincible and unanswerable arguments out of the word of truth; to open it wide, that overflowing rivers of evangelical joys, which may spring (to him that is advised and believes the Prophets) abundantly even from the weakest faith to refresh and comfort it; telling thee, that as thine humbled soul, leaning upon Christ, draws much heavenly virtue, mortifying power, and sanctifying grace from him, so it may and ought also to draw abundance of spiritual-lightsomeness from that ever-springing fountain of life, &c.; — yet notwithstanding all this, thou sufferest some malicious counter-blasts and contrary suggestions of the devil to disperse and frustrate all these well-grounded and glorious messages; and therefore it is just with God that thou fare the worse at his hands, and fall short of thine expectation, because thou givest more credit to the father of lies than to the Lord of truth. Since thou spillest all the cordials that are tendered unto thee in the name of Christ by his faithful physicians, thou art deservedly destitute of comfort still. Many in such cases, while God's messenger, who can rightly declare his ways unto them, stands by, opening and applying the rich treasures of God's free mercy in the mystery of the gospel, and with present replies repelling Satan's cavils, are reasonably well cheered and revived; but when he is gone they very weakly and unworthily give way again to that foul lying fiend, to cast a discomfutable mist over the tender eye of their weak faith, and to domineer as he did before.

Tell me true, if thou wert in doubt and distress about thy temporal state, tenure of thy lands, soundness of thy title-deeds, wouldst thou advise with and take counsel from a fool, a knave, and an enemy; or wouldst thou make choice of an honest, wise, understanding friend? I doubt

not of thine answer. And wilt thou then so far disparage divine truth, gratify hell, and hurt thine own heart, as in that weightiest point of thy spiritual state to consult and resolve with the devil, a liar, a murderer, a sworn enemy to God's glory and thy soul's good; and neglect God himself, blessed for ever, speaking unto thee out of his word, by that minister, which in such a case durst not falsify or flatter thee for a world for gold? Shall many thousands of worldly wise men give credit very readily and roundly to "daubers with untempered mortar," upon a false and rotten foundation, to the most certain and eternal ruin of their souls; and shall not a humble, an upright-hearted man, believe the prophet upon good ground, that the bones which the heavy burthen of sin hath broken may rejoice? God forbid.

(3.) Nay, but suppose the party be truly humbled, very thankful, resolute against all sin, labour to believe the prophets, &c. and yet no comfort come. I say then there is one other duty expected at thy hands, right precious and pleasing unto God, and that is *waiting*; by which God would,

1. Set yet a sharper edge and eagerness, more hungering and thirsting, greater longing and panting after the ravishing sweetness of his comfortable presence, with which melting, earnest, crying dispositions, he is very much delighted.

2. Cause us with peace and patience to submit unto and depend upon his merciful wisdom in disposing and appointing times and seasons for our deliverances and refreshings. For he well knows that very point and period of time, first, when his mercy shall be most magnified; secondly, his children's hearts most seasonably comforted and kindly enlarged to pour out themselves in thankfulness; thirdly, his and our spiritual enemies most gloriously confounded.

3. Quicken and set on work with extraordinary fervency the spirit of prayer, fright us further from sin for the time to come; fit us for a more fruitful improvement of all offers and opportunities to do our souls good; to make more of "joy and peace in believing" when we enjoy it; and to declare to others in like extremity God's dealings with us for their support, &c.

We must learn then to expect and be content with God's season; and hold up our hearts in the mean time with such considerations as these: First, we perform a very acceptable service, and a Christian duty, right pleasing unto and much prevailing with God, by waiting. See Isa. xl, 31; xlix, 23; lxiv, 4; and Lam. iii, 25. Secondly, By our

patient dependence upon God in this kind, we may mightily increase and multiply our comfort when his time is come. For he is wont to recompense abundantly at last his longer tarrying with excess of joy, and overflowing expressions of his love. Thirdly, we must ever remember, that all the while he exerciseth us with waiting, that season is not yet come, which in his merciful wisdom he holds the meetest to magnify the glory of his mercy most, and most wisely to advance our spiritual good. Fourthly, and that which is best of all, if the true convert, resting his weary soul upon the Lord Jesus and promises of life, should be taken away before he attain his desired comfort, he shall be certainly saved, and undoubtedly crowned with everlasting blessedness; for "blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isa. xxx, 18). A man is saved by believing; and not by "joy and peace in believing." Salvation is an inseparable companion of faith; but joy and peace accompany it as a separable accident; as that which may be removed from it; yea, there is cause why it should be removed. The light would never be so acceptable, were it not for the usual intercourse of darkness.

Take here notice upon this occasion, that as a truly humbled soul receiving Christ in the sense I have said, hath power given him thereby to become the Son of God; so he doth draw also from that glorious object of faith, so full of all amiableness, excellency, and sweetness—

1. Sometimes, by the mercy of God, a very sensible, stirring, and ravishing joy, "unspeakable and full of glory;" which though it be many times very short, yet is unutterably sweet.

2. If not so, yet an habitual calmness of conscience, if I may so call it; which though we do not mark it so much, or magnify God's mercy for it as we ought, yet it makes us differ as far by a comfortable freedom from many slavish, guilty twitches, and an universal contentedness in all our courses and passages through this vale of tears, from the world's dearest and most admired favourite, as the highest region of the air from the restless and raging sea: especially if that unhappily happy wretch have a waking conscience.

3. Or at least ever a secret heavenly vigour, whereby the soul is savingly supported in what state soever, though it be under the continued pressures of most hideous temptations; the tithe of the terror whereof would make many a worldling make way with himself, because he wants this stay. And suppose they should continue unto the last gasp; even unto thine ending hour, nay entrance into heaven;

yet thy spiritual state is not thereby prejudiced, but thy salvation is still most sure; and thy first taste of those eternal joys shall be the sweeter, by how much thy former temptations and trials have been the sorer: for we must ever hold fast this blessed truth, that we are justified by casting ourselves upon Christ, not by comfort; by faith, not by feeling; by trusting the sure word of God, not by assurance.

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## CHAP. VI.

Two Considerations more against Unadvisedness, for the Cure of the former Malady.

BUT I desire to come yet nearer to thy conscience, and to press comfort upon thee with such strong and irresistible arguments, as all the subtlety of the infernal powers will never be able to dissolve.

Thou sayest, and I suppose so, that thou art "weary of all thy sins," dost hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Christ; prizest him before all the world; hast cast thyself upon his truth and tender-heartedness for everlasting safety; and yet thou feelest no special sensible joy in thine heart thereupon. Be it so; yet upon this occasion take my counsel, and at my request address thyself again, and have recourse afresh unto the promises: settle thy soul upon them seriously, with fixed meditation and fervent prayer: set thyself purposely with earnestness and industry to suck from them their heavenly sweetness. And then, how is it possible that thine humble, upright heart should make resistance to those mighty torrents of spiritual joys and refreshings, which by a natural and necessary consequence spring abundantly from the ensuing comfortable conclusions, grounded upon the sure word of God, and thine own inward sense and most certain undeniable experience?

Whosoever "hungers and thirsts after righteousness" is blessed from Christ's own mouth, Matt. v, 6. And this blessedness compriseth an absolute and universal confluence of all excellencies, perfections, pleasures, and felicities in this world, and in the world to come; begun in some measure in the kingdom of grace, and made complete in the kingdom of glory through all eternity.

But I, mayest thou say, out of evident feeling and experience, find myself to "hunger and thirst after righteousness."

Therefore I am most certainly blessed and interested in all the rich purchases of Christ's dearest blood and merit, which is the full price of the kingdom of heaven and all the glory thereof.

Whosoever is athirst, hath his part in the "fountain of the water of life" (Rev. xxi, 6; xxii, 17; John vii, 37; and Isa. lv, 1).

But I, mayest thou say, cannot deny, dare not belie myself, but that my poor heart thirsts unfeignedly to be bathed in the heavenly streams of God's free favour and Christ's sovereign blood.

Therefore, undoubtedly I have my part in the well of life everlastingly; whence, what delicious streams of dearest joy do sweetly flow!

Whosoever "labours and is heavy laden" may justly challenge at the hands of Christ rest and refreshing (Matt. xi, 28).

But I feel all my sins an intolerable burthen upon my wounded soul, and most willingly take him as a Saviour and a Lord.

Therefore I have my portion in his spiritual and eternal rest.

"The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy," and who dwells "in the high and holy place;" dwelleth also in every "humble and contrite spirit," as in a royal throne. He hath, as it were, two thrones; one in the empyrean heaven, the other in a broken heart (Isa. lvii, 15).

But my heart lies groveling in the dust, humbled under the mighty hand of God, and trembling at his feet.

Therefore it is the mansion of Jehovah, blessed for ever.

Whosoever "confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy" (Prov. xxviii, 13).

But I confess and abominate all sin, resolved never to "turn again to folly."

Therefore mercy is most certainly mine.

He in whose heart the Holy Ghost hath enkindled a kindly heat of affection to the brethren, hath passed from death to life (1 John iii, 14).

But, by the mercy of God, my heart is wholly set upon the "brotherhood" (1 Pet. ii, 17), which I heartily hated heretofore.

Therefore I have passed from death to life.

These and the like conclusions are in themselves as full of sound joy and true comfort, as the sun is of light or the sea of waters. Open but the eye of thine humble soul, and thou mayest see many glorious things in them. Crush

them but a little with the hand of faith, and much delicious sweetness of spiritual peace may distil upon thy soul.

Lastly, such considerations as these may contribute some matter of comfort and support to him of weakest apprehension in this case.

1. If he consult with his own conscience, he shall happily find in his present sincere resolution an impossibility to turn back again to his former sinful life, pleasures, good-fellowship, sensual courses, and company. He says, and thinks it, that he will rather die than lie, swear, profane the sabbaths, put to usury, do wrong, keep any ill-gotten goods in his hands, haunt ale-houses, play-houses, gaming-houses; or willingly put his heart or hand to any kind of iniquity, as he was formerly wont. And doth nature, think you, keep him back, or grace and God's Spirit?

2. If he should now hear, and have his ears filled with oaths, blasphemies, ribald talk, rotten speeches, filthy songs, railing at God's people, scoffing at religion, jesting out of scriptures, &c., his heart would rise; he would either reprove them or be rid of them as soon as he could; whereas heretofore he hath been perhaps a delightful hearer of them, if not a notorious actor himself. And whence do you think doth this arise, but from the seed of God remaining in him?

3. If when you hear him complain, that howsoever he hath cast himself upon Christ, as the prophets have counselled him, yet since thereupon he feels no such comfort and peace in believing as other Christians do, he begins to doubt whether he hath done well or no, and to conceive that he hath laid hold upon the promises too soon; nay, and it may be upon this discontent, doth thus further enlarge his complaint—Alas! my sins have formerly been so great, my heart is at this present so hard, my sorrow so scant, my failings so many, that I know not what to say to myself. Methinks I can neither pray, confer, love the brethren, sanctify the sabbath, rejoice in the Lord, as I see other of God's children do; and therefore I am afraid all is nought. What heart can I have to hold on?—I say, if to such a speech thou shouldst for trial give this reply: Well then, if it be so, even give over all; strive no more against the stream; trouble thyself no longer with reading, prayer, following sermons, forbearing good-fellowship and thine old companions. And since no comfort comes by casting thyself upon Christ, cast thyself again into the current of the times, course of the world, and merry company; for there, yet, is some little poor pleasure to be had at least. Oh! No, no, no, would he say; that will

I never do, whatsoever comes of me. I will trust in my Christ, though he should kill me; for all these discouragements I will by no means cast away my confidence: I have been so freshly stung with their guilt, that I will rather be pulled in pieces with wild horses than plunge again into carnal pleasures. I will put my hand to all holy duties in obedience to God, though I perform them never so weakly. I will, by the mercy of God, keep my face towards heaven and back to Sodom so long as I breathe, come what will, &c. And whence do you think springs this resolution, but from a secret saving power, supporting him in the most desperate temptations and assaults of distrust?

Now this first, secret saving power, by which an humble soul leaning upon Christ is supported, when it is at the lowest; secondly, the seed of God; and thirdly, presence of grace, do every one of them argue a blessed state, in which thou shalt be certainly saved; and therefore thou mayest lift up thine heart and head with comfort unspeakable and glorious.

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## CHAP. VII.

The Third Malady of Conscience. The Danger of it. The Causes of it. Two things proposed for Cure of it.

3. MANY there are who much complain of the great disproportion between the notorious wickedness of their former life and their lamentable weakness of an answerable bewailing it; between the number of their sins and fewness of their tears; the heinousness of their rebellions, and little measure of their humiliation. And thereupon, because they did not find and feel those terrors and extraordinary troubles of mind in their turning unto God; those violent passions and pangs in their new birth, which they have seen, heard, or read of, or known in others, perhaps far less sinners than themselves; they are much troubled with distractions and doubts about the truth and soundness of their conversion. Whereby they receive a great deal of hurt and hindrance in their spiritual state; for Satan gains very much by such a suggestion, and grounds many times a manifold mischief upon it. For by keeping this temptation on foot, these doubts and troubles in their minds whether they be truly converted or no, he labours and too often prevails—

1. To hinder the Christian in his spiritual building. With what heart can he hold on who doubts of the sound-

ness and sure laying of the foundation? What progress is he like to make in Christianity who continually terrifies himself with fearful exceptions and oppositions about the truth of his conversion? A man in a long journey would jog on but very heavily, if he doubted whether he were in the right way or no.

2. To abate, lessen, and abridge his courage in standing on God's side, patience under the cross, and spiritual mirth in good company. To keep him in dulness of heart, deadness of affections, distractions at holy exercises, and under the reign of almost a continual sadness and uncomfortable walking; to make him quite neglect and never look towards those sweet commands of the blessed Spirit: "Rejoice evermore. Rejoice; and I say again, rejoice. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart."

3. To fasten a great deal of dishonour upon God, [when he can make the Christian disavow, as it were, and nullify in his estimation, so great a work of mercy and grace, stamped upon his soul by an Almighty hand. A work for wonder and power answerable, if not transcendent, to the creation of the world. To the production whereof the infinite mercies of the Father of all mercy; the warmest heart's blood of his only Son; the mightiest moving of the blessed Spirit, were required. Now what an indignity and disparagement offered unto so glorious a workman and blessed a work, to assent and subscribe unto the devil, a known liar, that there is no such thing!

4. To double and aggravate upon the Christian the grievous sin of unbelief. Not to believe the promises as they lie in his book, is an unworthy and wicked wrong unto the truth of God. But for a man to draw back and deny when they are all made good upon his soul, makes him worse than Thomas, the apostle; for when he had thrust his hand into Christ's side he believed. But in the present case a man is ready to renounce and disclaim, though he have already grasped in the arms of his faith the crucified bleeding body of his blessed Redeemer, the sacred and saving virtue whereof hath inspired into the whole man a new, spiritual, sanctifying life, and a sensible, undeniable change from what it was.

5. To detain the heart locked up, as it were, in a perpetual barrenness from giving of thanks, which is one of the noblest and most acceptable sacrifices and services that is offered unto God. Now what a mischief is this, that an upright heart should be laced up, and his tongue tied by the devil's temptation from magnifying heartily the glory

of God's free grace for such a work! I mean the new creation, at which heaven and earth, angels and men, and all creatures, may stand everlastingly amazed. So sweet it is and admirable, and makes an immortal soul for ever.

But to keep myself to the point. Those who complain, as I have said, that because the pangs of their new birth were not, in that proportion they desire, answerable to the heinousness of their former pestilent courses and abominableness of their foregone ill-spent life, many times suspect themselves, and are much troubled about the truth of their conversion; may have their doubts and scruples increased, by taking notice of such propositions as these, which divines both ancient and modern let fall sometimes in their penitential discourses:—

“Ordinarily men are wounded in their consciences at their conversion, answerably to the wickedness of their former conversation.”—“Contrition in true converts is for the most part proportionable to the heinousness of their former courses.—“The more wicked that thy former life hath been, the more fervent and earnest let thy repentance or returning be\*.”

“Sorrow must be proportionable to our sins. The greater our sin, the fuller must be our sorrow †.”

“According to the weight of sin upon the conscience, ought penitent sorrow to be weighty ‡.”

“He that hath exceeded in sin, let him exceed also in sorrow §.”

“Look how great our sins are, let us so greatly lament them ||.”

“Let the mind of every one drink up so much of the tears of penitent compunction, as he remembers himself to have withered from God by wickedness ¶.”

“Grievous sins require most grievous lamentations\*\*.”

“The measure of your mourning must be agreeable and proportionable to the sin ††.”

And we may see these rules represented unto us in the practice of Manasseh, who being a most grievous sinner (2 Chron. xxxiii, 6), “humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers” (ver. 12). In the woman who is called a sinner (Luke vii, 37) emphatically, and by a kind of singularity, and therefore sorrows extraordinarily (ver. 38), and “wipes Christ's feet with tears.” In the idolatrous Israelites upon their turning unto the Lord (1 Sam, vii, 4,

\* Homil. of Repentance.

† Dike on Repentance, chap. iv.

‡ Ambr. ad Virg. corr. cap. viii.

§ Idem de Penit. lib. i, cap. ii.

|| Cypr. de Lapsis ad fin.

¶ Gregor. Pastor. Curæ, cap. xxx.

\*\* Aug. ad Fratr. in cremo.

†† Greenham's Grave Counsel.

6), "who drew water, and poured it out before the Lord." In the hearers of Peter, who having their consciences all bloody with the horrible guilt of crucifying the Lord of life (Acts ii, 33, 36), were "pricked in their hearts" (ver. 37) with such horror and raging anguish, as if so many poisoned daggers and scorpions' stings were fastened in them. In Paul, who having been a heinous offender, a grievous persecutor (Acts ix), whereas the other apostles, as one says, had been honest and sober fishermen, tasted deeper of this cup than they; for he tells us, Rom. viii, 11, that "the law slew him." He was strangely amazed with a voice from heaven, struck down to the earth, and stark blind. "He trembled and was astonished: for three days he did neither eat nor drink," &c. (Acts ix.)

And there is good reason for it. For ordinarily the newly enlightened eye of a fresh bleeding conscience is very sharp and clear, piercing and sightful, greedy to discover every stain and spot of the soul; to dive even to the heart root, to the blackest bottom and ugliest nook of a man's former hellish courses; to look back with a curious survey through the pure perspective of God's righteous law over his whole life, to his very birth sin and Adam's rebellion. And in this sad and heavy search, it is very inquisitive after and apprehensive of all circumstances which may add to the heinousness of sin and horror in his heart. It is quick-sighted into all aggravating considerations; and quickly learns and looks upon all those ways, degrees, and circumstances by which sins are made more notorious and hateful. And what the spirit of bondage in a fearful heart may infer hereupon you may easily judge.

Now to the case proposed; I say,

1. That between sin and sorrow we cannot expect a precise equation; not an arithmetical, but a geometrical proportion. Great sins should be greatly lamented; yet no sin can be sufficiently sorrowed for, though it may be savingly. When we say the pangs of the new birth must be answerable to our former sinful provocations, we mean not that we can mourn for sin according to its merit; that is impossible. But great sins require a great deal of sorrow. We must not think that we have sorrowed enough for any sin, though we can never sorrow sufficiently.

Before I proceed to a farther and fuller satisfaction in the point, let me tell you by the way how uncomfortable and doubtful the popish doctrine is in this matter, that the truth of our tenet may appear the more precious, and taste more sweet.

Their *attrition* and *contrition*, as I take it, differ as our

legal and evangelical repentance ; 1. In respect of the object. Contrition, as they say, is sorrow for sin, as an offence against God ; attrition is a grief for sin, as liable to punishment. 2. In respect of the cause. Contrition ariseth from son-like, attrition from servile fear\*.

This contrition is the cause of the remission of sins†. Well then, thou art a papist and troubled in conscience. Thou knowest well that without contrition, no remission : but when comest thou to that measure and degree which may give thee some contentment about the pardon of thy sins ? Go unto them in this point for resolution and relief, and thou goest unto a rack. Consult with their chapters, “De quantitate Contritionis,” of the amount of sorrow, and they are able to confound thee with many desperate distractions.

1. Look back upon the elder schoolmen ; and you shall have Adrian ‡ and others tell you of a contrition in the highest strain, and to which nothing can be added §. This opinion Vega refutes ||, and Bellarmine dislikes it ¶. Note by the way how sweetly they agree ; our concord is angelical in respect of their confusions.

2. Go to Scotus\*\* and his followers, and you shall find him to talk of a certain *intensity* of contrition, which is only known unto God ; but this Greg. de Valent. censures as very false††. You see again, as there is no truth in their tenets, so no constancy, no concord, and by consequence no comfort to a truly troubled spirit.

3. Come at length to the latter locusts, some modern Jesuits, daubers over of their superstitious ruins with many rotten distinctions (I mean Bellarmine, Greg. de Valent. and their fellows), and they dare not stand either to the *unknown intensity* of Scotus, nor that of *highest pitch*, which Adrian holds ; but come in with a sorrow for sin, *appreciativè summus*. And what is that, think you ?

Hence Bellarmine (for Valent. speaks more warily in the quoted place, Art. “*Neque verò* ;” yet very weakly too, for in such cases the troubled mind is not wont to rest upon generals only, but will in spite of ourselves bring us to particulars, howsoever Scotus, Navar, and Madina advise the contrary)—“Sorrow for sin,” saith he, “is then *summus*

\* See Valent. Disp. vii, q. 8, De Contrit. punct. 2.

† Bellar. lib. ii, De Pœnit. cap. xii.

‡ Quæst ii, de Pœnit. quodlib. v, artic. 3.

§ Valent. tom. iv, disp. 7, qu. 8, de Contritione, punct. 5.

|| De Justif. lib. xiii, cap. xiv ad princ.

¶ De Pœnit. lib. ii, cap. xi, art. denique si summus.

\*\* In 4 sent. dist. xiv, q. 2.

†† Tom. iv, col. 17, 24.

*appreciatiuè*, when the will doth more esteem the detestation of sin, than the attainment of any good, or escaping any ill ;” and so by consequence (for, as I intimated, a troubled conscience in such a case is very curious and inquisitive, and will not stay only upon confused and general notions of good and ill, but easily descend to particulars, to know its state more perfectly, especially in a point of so great importance) a man must find his heart first to prize the hatred of sin before the happiness of heavenly joys or avoiding hellish pains, before he can come to comfort of the remission of his sins. What a torture were it to a troubled spirit to fall into the hands of such true pharisees, who lay heavy burthens upon others, but will not touch them themselves with the least of their fingers. But, blessed be God! we truly teach that it is not so much the measure and amount, as the truth and heartiness of our sorrow, which fits for the promises of life and pardon of sin. Yet I must say this also, he that thinks he hath sorrowed sufficiently, never sorrowed truly. And I like Bellarmine’s last proposition well, in the fore-cited place, if it be thus understood, that we must desire, aim, and endeavour after the highest pitch of godly sorrow which can possibly be attained. But it is one thing to say, either just so much measure of sorrow or no mercy—such a quantity of contrition or no remission—another thing to say we must long and labour to bring our naughty hearts to this, even to be willing rather to lie in hell than to live in sin. Perfections of grace are aimed at in this life, not attained.

4. I confess some of them sometimes, by reason of freedom in their schools, over-ruled like Caiaphas, or over-mastered by the clearness and invincibleness of the truth, speak something more orthodoxically \* ; but you see them still like the four winds blow in one another’s faces. Hereupon I have many times marvelled, that understanding papists looking into the point are not plunged into desperate perplexities, considering the variety of opinions and uncertainty of the degree of sorrow required to their contrition : but when I reflected upon another rotten daubing trick of theirs, I rather wonder at the depths of their antichristian craft in so politicly and plausibly patching together their popish paradoxes, that they may still keep their deluded disciples in contentment, and please them still at least with some palliatives instead of cures. It is this I mean : they

\* See on this point, Vega, lib. iii, cap. xxiv, art. “ Ad que accedit ;” Ibid. art. “ Et Sacerdotes ;” Tolet. Instruct. Sacerd. lib. ii, cap. v, art. “ Quartam dubium ;” Navar. cap. i, num. xviii ; Estius, in iv, sent. dist. xvi, sect. vii, art. “ Adde quòd si summus.” &c.

hold also (Prodigious infatuation ! It is impossible that the learned on the pope's side — were not that curse justly upon them, 2 Thes. ii, 10, 11, " Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved ; God sends them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie " — should ever be so grossly blinded) ; I say they hold, that a man *ex attrito*, by the power of the priestly absolution is made *contritus* ; and that *ex opere operato*, as Valent. affirms. Which in effect is thus much ; that having but only attrition (legal repentance), that fruitless sorrow which may be found in a Judas, a Latomus, and which a reprobate may carry with him to hell, is by the virtue of their feigned sacrament, " by the sacramental act of absolution," as they call it, made truly and savingly contrite and put into a state of justification. Hear it in the words of that great and famous light of Ireland \*, and for ever abhor all such popish impostures : " When the priest with his power of forgiving sins interposeth himself in the business, they tell us that attrition, by virtue of the keys, is made contrition ; that is to say, that a sorrow arising from a servile fear of punishment, and such a fruitless repentance as the reprobate may carry with them to hell, by virtue of the priest's absolution is made so fruitful, that it shall serve the turn for obtaining forgiveness of sins, as if it had been that godly sorrow, which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of (2 Cor. vii, 10) ; by which spiritual cozenage many poor souls are most miserably deluded, while they persuade themselves that upon the receipt of the priest's acquittance, upon this carnal sorrow of theirs, all scores are cleared until that day, and then beginning upon a new reckoning, they sin and confess, confess and sin afresh ; and tread this round so long, till they put off all thought of saving repentance ; and so the blind following the blind, both at last follow into the pit."

Or thus, a little after : —

" It hath been always observed for a special difference betwixt good and bad men, that the one hated sin for the love of virtue, the other only for the fear of punishment. The like difference do our adversaries make betwixt *contrition* and *attrition*. That the hatred of sin in the one proceedeth from the love of God, and of righteousness in the other from the fear of punishment ; and yet teach for all this that attrition, which they confess would not otherwise suffice to justify a man, being joined with the priest's absolution is sufficient for that purpose. He that was *attrite*

\* Usher, in his Answer to a Jesuit's Challenge.

being by virtue of this absolution made *contrite* and justified: that is to say, he that was led only by a servile fear, and consequently was to be ranked among disordered and evil persons, being by this means put in as good a case for the matter of the forgiveness of his sins as he that loveth God sincerely. For they themselves do grant, that such as have this servile fear, from whence *attrition* issueth, are to be accounted evil and disordered men," &c.

But leaving these blind pharisees in the endless maze of their inextricable errors, until it please the Lord to enlighten them and by a strong hand pull them out, which I heartily desire and will ever pray, I come to prosecute mine own point.

2. If you ask me when trouble for sin is saving, I would answer, when it is true. If you further demand when is it true; I would say, when it drives thee utterly out of thy self, and to *sell all* in the sense I have said before; and brings thee with a sincere thirst and settled resolution to Jesus Christ, to live and die with him as a Saviour and a Lord, and is accompanied with an universal change in body, soul, and spirit.

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## CHAP. VIII.

The Third Way of Curing the former Malady. One thing to be considered to that purpose.

IN the third place, take notice of such considerations as these:—

1. God, being a most free agent, doth not tie himself constantly and invariably to ordinary, expected, set, and the same forms, measures, times, proportions of his ways, and workings upon his children. For he is wise without limit and above measure; and therefore hath many secret and glorious ends and aims, which, according to his good pleasure, much diversify the means serviceable and subordinate thereunto. From whence may spring these three conclusions:—

(1.) He may for the most part create in the heart of the true convert terrors and troubles of conscience, amazements and mourning, answerable in some good measure to the variety, vanity, and villany of his former wicked ways and lewd life. As appears before in Manasseh, the sinful woman, idolatrous Israelites, hearers of Peter, and many in these days, if it were convenient to name them. "For the

most part," saith a great divine, "the violence of humiliation in the calling of a sinner, is according to the continuance and greatness of his actual transgressions. According to the same is the rent in the conscience and soul. Therefore, if there be any who hath been a great and grievous sinner, and hath not with violence been pulled from his sin, he may do well to suspect and search himself soundly."

(2.) He may sometimes suffer a notorious sinner to pass something more easily and with less terror though the pangs of the new birth. But then such a one is wont to walk more humbly before God all his life after, for that he was not humbled with more remarkableness of penitent remorse and spiritual anguish in his conversion; and so extension and continuance of godly grief that he was not more grieved, makes up as it were that desired intensity and extremity of pangs which might justly have pained him in his passing from death to life. Every hearty and sensible complaint that the pangs of the new birth were not more painful and proportionable to the pollutions of his youth, is, as it were, and in the sense I have said, a pang of the new birth. Or else upon some occasion afterward in his Christian course he may be revisited and vexed afresh with more terror and trouble of conscience than in his first change; as in such cases as these:—1st. If he should (which God forbid!) by some violent enticement and snaring opportunity be entangled again and reinfected with any former sensual pleasure of his unregenerate time; or by neglect of his care and watchfulness over his ways be suddenly surprised with some new scandalous sin. 2dly. Upon the assault of some extraordinary frightening temptation, or pressing of hideous thoughts upon his melancholic imagination. 3dly. When some heavy cross or sickness\* after many prosperous days shall seize upon him, which may lie sore and long. 4thly. Upon his bed of death; especially if he fall upon it immediately after some relapse, backsliding, or new wound of conscience. There is a kind of natural power besides God's special hand in sickness, sorrow, darkness, melancholy, the night, extraordinary crosses, the bed of death, to represent the true number and

\* David, Psalm xxxviii, being put in mind by his sickness of God's wrath against sin, was full sorely afflicted in soul; so that he cries: "There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as a heavy burthen they are too heavy for me. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. My sorrow is continually before me."

heinousness of sins with greater horror and more unto the life; whereas prosperity, health, and days of peace, do rather delude the eyes of the conscience; and like false and flattering glasses make those foul fiends seem fairer than they are indeed. And therefore the Christian, especially that I speak of, being outwardly distressed, cast upon his bed of death, or any ways extraordinarily visited by God's hand, seeing his sins upon the sudden marshalled and marching against him; more in number and more fiercely than heretofore, may for the while be surprised and exercised with unexpected terror, until by meditation upon God's former special mercy unto him in spiritual things, upon the marks and effects of his change, upon the uprightness of his heart towards God in the days of health, upon those testimonies and assurances which his Christian friends can give him of his being in a gracious state, with such like holy helps; and so in cool blood and above all resolving to stick for ever fast to the Lord Jesus, though he kill him, he be raised again from such dejections of spirit to the wonted confidence and comfort of his interest in Christ and salvation of his soul. Here, by the way, let none think it strange, that even the dearest servants of Christ may be revisited\* with more horror of conscience afterward than at their first turning on God's side. As appears in Job, Hezekiah, David, in Mrs. Brettergh, Mr. Peacock, &c. Besides the proposed cases, this revisitation may befall them also—5thly. For

\* But how may this revisitation with as great, if not greater terrors than at first turning unto God, consist with that, Rom. viii, 15, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;" which seems to import thus much, that God's child receives the spirit of bondage no more after he hath once received the spirit of adoption, revealing and evidencing unto him that he is a son and that God is his father? In answer: The same Spirit produceth these contrary effects. By the *law*, fear and terror, by the *gospel*, peace and prayer. Now at the first taking a man in hand to turn him to the Lord, the spirit of bondage, by the work of the law, doth testify unto the soul that it is in a wretched and damnable state, bound over to the guilt of its own sin, and God's fiery wrath, to death, and hell, and damnation for ever; that so it may be driven to Jesus Christ for release and pardon. But after the plantation of faith and presence of the spirit of adoption it never testifies so again, because it would be an untruth. It may afterward work an apprehension that God is angry; but not that he is not a father. The hiding of God's face, which may often befall his child; the darkness of our own spirits thereupon, which may revive all the old guilt again; and the devil's cruel pressing upon us upon such advantages, raise these hideous mists of horror I am speaking of, and such terrible after-tempests, of which our only-wise and all powerful God makes excellent use, both for ourselves and others, and attains thereby his own most glorious, secret, and sacred end, as appears in the following passage.

their own trial. This was the end, as it may seem, why Job was set up as a mark for the envenomed arrows of the Almighty to aim at, and whole armies of terrors to fight against. He approved himself to be steel to the back as they say, by that victorious ejaculation, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job xiii, 15); whereby God was mightily honoured, Satan utterly confounded, and that controversy, "whether Job feared God for nought or no?" gloriously ended on God's side. 6thly. That they may grow into greater conformity with their blessed Saviour in spiritual sufferings. 7thly. That, tasting again sometimes the bitterness of divine wrath for sin, they may be the more frightened and flee further from it. 8thly. That thereby the incomprehensible love of Christ toward them may sink deeper into their hearts, who for their sakes and salvation drunk deep and large, and the very dregs of that cup, the least drop whereof is to them so bitter and intolerable. 9thly. That by sense of the contrary, their joy in the favour and light of God's countenance may be more joyful, their spiritual peace more pleasant, the pleasure of grace more precious, the comforts of godliness more comfortable, &c. 10thly. For admonition to others; to draw duller and drowsy Christians to more strictness, watchfulness, and zeal, by observing the spiritual troubles and terrors of those who are far more holy and righteous than themselves. To intimate unto formal professors that all is certainly nought with them, who ordinarily are mere strangers to all afflictions of soul and sorrow for sin. 11thly. For terror to many, who going on securely in their sensual courses, are wont to cry down all they can the power of preaching, by crying to their companions thus, or in the like manner — "Well, for all this, we hope hell is not so hot, nor sin so heavy, nor the devil so black, nor God so unmerciful, as these precise preachers would make them." How may such as these be affrighted and terrified upon this occasion, with pondering upon that terrible place, 1 Pet. iv, 17, 18. "If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved;" if God's children have their consciences scorched, as it were, with the flames of hell; "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear," but even in the bottom of that fiery lake, and amidst the unquenchable rage of those endless flames? 12thly. For the just hardening of such as hate to be reformed, and are desperately resolved against the saving preciseness of the saints. It may be in this manner: A godly man hath lived long amongst rebels, thorns, and scorpions, scorners, railers, per-

secutors, who although he hath shined all the while "as a light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," yet they were ever so far from being heated with love of heavenly things by his holy life, or won unto good by his gracious example, that like so many bats and owls, impatient of all spiritual light, they did either fly from it as far as they could in affection and practice, if not in habitation, or fell upon it fiercely with their envenomed claws of spite and cruelty, to extinguish quite, if it were possible, such blessed beams of saving light; and to darken, with hellish mists of ignorance and ill life, the place where they live. They wilfully blinded themselves with a pestilent conceit, that his sincerity was nothing but hypocrisy; his holiness only humour; his forwardness fantasticalness, his sanctification singularity. And thereupon resolved and boisterously combined against him with all their policy, purses, and possibilities, like those ungodly ones mentioned in the book of Wisdom, "Let us lie in wait for the righteous; because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings; he upbraideth us with our offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressings of our education," &c. I say, God may suffer such a man upon his death-bed to fall into some more extraordinary observable discomfort and distress of conscience; of which those graceless wretches taking notice, may thereby be made desperately obstinate and hardened in their lewd and carnal courses. For seeing God's hand upon him in that fearful manner, and wanting the spirit of discerning, they conclude most peremptorily, that notwithstanding his great shows, he was most certainly but a counterfeit. And so themselves become many times upon that occasion most implacable enemies to grace and all good men. They are more strongly locked up in the arms of the devil, faster nailed to formality or good-fellowship; and, which is the perfection of their madness and misery, "bless themselves in their hearts," saying merrily to their brethren in iniquity: "You see now what these men are, which make themselves so holy and are so hot in religion: these are the fellows which pretend to be so scrupulous and precise; and of that singular strain of sanctity that they think none shall be saved but themselves. You see in this man the desperate end of such hypocritical puritans." Thus the glory of God's justice is justly magnified, by letting them grow stark blind who wilfully shut their eyes against the light of grace, by giving them over to a reprobate mind who so maliciously hated to be reformed; and so too often they walk on for ever after, with confidence and hardness of heart which cannot repent, in a perpetual

prejudice against purity and the power of godliness, unto the pit of hell. Whereas, by the mercy of God and inviolable constancy of his covenant, that blessed man, by these terrors and afflictions of conscience, besides glorifying God in hardening others, is the more thoroughly fitted and refined for that glory which is presently to be revealed.

(3.) Greatest humiliations do not ever argue and import the greatest sinners. For sins are not always the cause of our afflictions, particularly and directly, but sometimes some other motives. Abraham was put unto that heavy task of taking away his own only dear son's life, principally for the trial of his faith. Job was visited with such a matchless variety and extremity of afflictions, for the purpose of ending that controversy between God and Satan, whether he feared God for nought or no? God's heavy hand was sometimes upon David especially for the manifestation of his innocency (Psalm xvii, 3); nay, our blessed Saviour, infinitely free from sin, was notwithstanding tempted and tried by Satan and the world, that his heavenly virtues and divine excellencies might appear and be made more illustrious; and himself tells us (John ix, 3) that the blind man was so born, neither for his own sin nor for the sin of his parents, "but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

For the particular I have in hand,—to prevent some sin into which he sees his child inclinable and likely to fall, by reason of some violent occasion, natural propensity, strong temptation, or industrious malice of the devil to disgrace him and his profession scandalously, God in great mercy may give him a taste, nay a deep draught of the inexpressible terrors of a troubled mind again; that thereby he may be taught betime to take more heed, walk more warily, and stand upon his guard with extraordinary watchfulness against the very first assault and least insinuation of sin. There is preventing physic for preservation of health, as well as that when the disease is dangerously upon us, for recovery. There was given unto Paul a thorn in the flesh; which, if we will take the interpretation of some learned divines, was a wound in the spirit, the sting of conscience pressing him down to the nethermost hell in his present feeling, who had lately been taken up to the highest heaven, purposely lest he should swell with spiritual pride, be puffed up and "exalted above measure with the abundance of revelations." If we well weigh the admirable story of that gracious and holy servant of Christ, Mrs. Brettergh, we may probably conceive that a principal end why those most grievous spiritual afflictions of soul upon her last bed

were laid upon her, was in God's just judgment to blind yet more those bloody papists about her; and because they wilfully shut their eyes against that glorious light of true religion which she so blessedly and fruitfully expressed in her godly life, to let them thereby sink yet deeper into strong delusion; that they might stick still more stiffly to popish lies, according to that prophecy concerning the anti-christians (2 Thes. ii, 10, 11, 12), "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved; for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth," &c. which we see at this day verified with a witness in popish doctors, even their greatest scholars, as Bellarmine, and other polemical writers. And therefore let us never marvel, that though they be laden with much learning, yet that they should lie egregiously, and defend with infinite obstinacy and clamour the doctrine of devils, that accursed hydra of heresies in their voluminous dung-hills. Now God's judgment in hardening them hereby, as I have said, was the more just; because they were so far from being wrought upon and won by her heavenly conversation, that they were extraordinarily enraged against her goodness and profession of the gospel, as appears in that, besides their continual railing and roaring against her as an eminent light, like so many furious bedlams, they barbarously wreaked their malice and spite upon the dumb and innocent creatures, by killing at two several times her husband's horses and cattle in the night.

That her fiery trial, through which she passed as purest gold into Abraham's bosom, did thus harden them is manifest by the event: for as the reverend penman of that story reports: "Those of the Romish faction bragged, as though an oracle had come from heaven to prove them catholics and us heretics." Prodigious folly! Damnable delusion!

It is so then, that God, in his inflicting of afflictions, doth not ever aim at sin as at the principal end. And yet do not mistake: though he punishes sometimes and not for sin, yet never without sin either inherent or imputed. There is ever matter enough in our sinful souls, and bodies, and lives, to afflict us infinitely. The best of us brought with us into this world that corruption which might bring upon us all the plagues of this and the other life. Every man hath in himself sufficient fuel for the fire of God's wrath to work upon still, if it pleased him in justice to set it on flame. As in the present point of spiritual terrors and troubles of mind, if God should out of his just and causeful indignation put the full sting but into the least sin, it

were able to put a man into the very mouth of hell. But I speak of God's more ordinary ways and dealings with the sons of men; and so I say, God may sometimes, for some hidden and holy ends seen and seeming good to his heavenly wisdom, bring a less heinous sinner through extraordinary horror out of his natural state into the good way.

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## CHAP. IX.

A Second and Third Thing to be considered for the cure of the former Malady,

2. AGGRAVATION of horror is occasioned, terrors and troubles may be multiplied and enlarged, in our enlargement from the state of darkness and chains of the devil, by—

(1.) Some precedents and preparatives which God sometimes in his unsearchable wisdom doth immediately premise or suffer to fall out, as,

1st. Some heavy cross and grievous affliction, to make the power of the law more forcible and fall more heavily upon our stubborn and stony hearts. This we see in Manasseh, who was, as it were, terrified out of his bloody and abominable courses by the heaviness and horror of his chains, and so "was humbled greatly before the God of his fathers," (2 Chron. xxxiii, 12). God's extraordinary angry visitations make men many times cry with troubled and grieved hearts, "Come, let us turn unto the Lord, he hath wounded us," &c.

2d. Strange terrors sometimes arising from external accidents, yea hidden natural causes, uncouth visions, and apparitions full of amazement and fear, bodily distempers, horrible injections, hideous thoughts, whereby they are mightily affrighted beforehand, and prepared to pass through the pangs of the new birth more terribly.

3d. Some heinous and crying sin which he suffers some to fall into, and immediately upon it awakes the conscience. That almighty physician, who is able to bring health out of poison, death out of life, light out of darkness, heaven out of hell, may by accident as it were prepare one to conversion by giving him over to the height of some one or more abhorred abominations and crimson sins; as we may see in Peter's hearers (Acts ii), Paul, Manasseh, the sinful woman, publicans and harlots, left to the killing of Christ, spilling the blood of the saints, those horrible outrages, ex-

treme filth, extortions, pollutions, Physicians, by ripening diseases, make way to heal them; for diseased matter is never more easily removed than when it exceedeth in ripeness and quantity.

4th. Lying long in ignorance, sensuality, and dissolute life, without profitable and powerful means. In this case, upon the first awaking and affrighting the conscience for sin, it may be exposed to many terrible perplexities and longer continued terrors. For the light of natural conscience bred with them in their own bosoms may in the mean time serve to enrage and torture, as we see in many guilty heathens; but there is no natural light to lead us to Christ and evangelical comforts. The commandments have ground in nature; but the mystery of the gospel is wholly supernatural. We find by manifold experience what a hard and heavy task it is to undertake a poor ignorant soul, troubled in mind. The cure is many times very difficult, dangerous, and long. The darkness of their ignorance, being now distressed in conscience, is very fit and fearful matter for Satan to work on hideously, and to play his pestilent pranks of most gross impostures and much hellish cruelty. His malicious main plot against such, and his utmost endeavour ordinarily is to drive them to self-destruction, if it be possible, before they get understanding in the ways of God, or we can get any competent light and comfort into their consciences.

(2.) Some concurrent circumstances; as,

1st. The melancholic and sad constitution of the party; that humour doth naturally give extraordinary entertainment and edge to terrors and sorrows.

2d. The crabbedness and crookedness of his natural disposition, which must be tamed and taken down with more labour and with much violence. A hard and knotty block must have a hard wedge. An angry word or frown will work more with some dispositions, than many sore blows upon a cross and sturdy spirit. God is here wont sweetly and wisely to apply himself to the several natures, conditions, and dispositions of his children.

3d. Height of place and happiness to have for this life what heart can wish. Whereby it comes to pass that men are so deeply drowned in sensuality, epicurism, and earthly-mindedness, that for a thorough change they have need many times to be taken down thoroughly with a deep sense of legal terrors.

4th. Excellency of natural or acquired parts and endowments; as wit, learning, courage, wisdom, &c. wretchedly abused and long misemployed upon wrong and wicked ob-

jects. Much ado many times and a great measure of humiliation will hardly fright such vain over-valuers of themselves and idolizers of their own sufficiency from their admired follies. And here also Satan interposeth most furiously, and hinders this happy work all he can possibly; for he well knows, that if such noble and worthy parts should be sanctified to the owners and turned the right way, his kingdom would fare the worse and he should be a greater loser. Suppose a Christian prince should with his army break into the Turk's dominion, would not the Turk fortify those castles best, out of which being won, the enemy might do him most harm? So whom the devil seeth to be the likeliest instruments for the overthrow of his kingdom, if once they become temples of the Holy Ghost, those he is most loath to lose, and labours mightily to keep in his slavery still. And therefore he opposes with all his power and policy, raising as many tempests of terror as he is able, that he may either drive them back in their passage to the holy path, or swallow them up in the abhorred gulf of despair by the way.

5th. A more searching and piercing ministry, which is ordinarily wont to awake the conscience with more terror, to irradiate and fill it with more universal and clearer light, to quicken it with more apprehension, and so proportionably to affect and afflict it with a more feeling and fearful sense of God's most just and holy wrath against sin. Whereupon they become excellent and everlasting Christians.

6th. Biting it in, as it may be called, and not opening the wound of conscience betimes to some skilful soul physician, may be an unhappy means, much to enlarge both the continuance and extremity of a man's spiritual trouble. Shame, bashfulness, pretence of want of opportunity, hope to get through by himself, &c., are ordinary keys to lock up his tongue at such a time. But sure I am, Satan hath a chief stroke and principal part to persuade concealment. For, alas! he wins by it wofully. All the while he plies with great advantage and much subtlety his hideous temptations to self-killing, despair of mercy, returning again to folly, &c.; and it is to be feared, which is a most grievous thing, that sometimes by this cruel silence he conquers and casts some poor souls upon the bloody and most abhorred villany of self-murder. Let such a one then be ever sure most resolutely to break through the devil's accursed snare in this kind, and to pour out his soul secrets betimes into some faithful holy bosom. I have heard many after they have escaped tell what strange tricks and variety of

devices he practised to discourage, divert, and disable them from discovering their minds as they purposed, even when they were come with much ado into the presence of the spiritual physician.

3. The ends to which God prepares and fits some by their sore travail in the new birth and longer languishing under his visiting hand in this kind. God may purpose sometimes in such cases:—

(1.) To employ them as Christ's most resolute and undaunted champions in more worthy services. In managing whereof, remembrance of their having been once, as it were, in the mouth of hell and scorched with flames of terror, serves as a continual spur and incentive unto them to do nobly, and to supply them from time to time with mightiness of courage, height of resolution, and eminency of zeal in those glorious ways. As we may see in those renowned pillars of the church, Austin, Luther, &c. The higher and greater the building is, the deeper must the foundation be laid in the earth.

(2.) To make them afterwards of excellent use and special dexterity, out of their former experience, to speak unto the hearts of their brethren ready to sink into the same gulf of horror and danger of despair, out of which the good hand of God's gracious providence hath by such and such means so mercifully pulled and preserved them. The same keys which did open the locks and loose the fetters which Satan hung upon their heavy hearts, may happily undo those also which he hath fastened upon the souls of others.

(3.) To render them to the church as remarkable precedents and mirrors of mortification, self-denial, heavenly mindedness, and holy walking with God, for others to look upon and imitate. Mindfulness of their former wrestling with the wrath of God, despair, and the horrors of hell, makes them for ever after more mindless of earthly things, weaned from the world, startling at every appearance of evil, greedy of godliness, conversing in heaven, excellent Christians indeed. Mr. John Glover, after five years horrible afflictions of soul, was framed thereby, saith Mr. Fox, to such mortification of life, as the like perhaps hath not been seen; in such sort, as he, being like one placed in heaven already and dead in this world, led a life altogether celestial\*.

\* See Acts and Monuments.

## CHAP. X.

The Fourth and Fifth Considerations which belong to the Third Way of Curing the former Malady. Also the Fifth Help for it by Advice.

4th. IN sound contrition and saving repentance, let us for the present take notice of,—First, a sensible smart and anguish of the heart. Secondly, a dislike, hatred, and aversion in the will. Thirdly, a change of the mind, enlightened and now enabled to give stronger reasons out of God's book, love of Christ, &c. against any sin, than carnal reason, the devil himself, or the drunken eloquence of his old good-fellow companions can suggest to the contrary. Fourthly, an universal opposition and constant endeavour against all manner of iniquity. Fifthly, a hearty sorrow that we are not more sorrowful.

Now, say I, if thou shouldst not feel in thine heart that stirring grief and violent rending for those many rebellions and horrible filth of thy naughty heart and former wicked life which thou heartily desirest, their heinousness exacts at thine hands, and many lesser sinners than thyself have endured; yet if thou findest an unfeigned hatred and displeas'dness in thy will, a settled resolution in thy mind, a watchful striving in all thy ways against all sin, true grief because thou art not more grieved, thou art by no means to cast away thy confidence, or be discomfited therefore, as though thou wert not truly converted; but only be advised and take occasion thereupon to walk more humbly before thy God, with sincerity and constancy to oppose all things which may hinder, and pursue all means that may further the more kindly melting of thine heart, sensible sorrow, and hearty mourning over him whom thou hast so cruelly pierced with thy youthful lusts and abominations.

5th. Lest any true hearted Christian, lying in no sin against conscience, and labouring sincerely to please God in all things, should be unnecessarily troubled and dejected with slavish fears and jealousies lest he be not truly turned unto God, because he feels not in himself that boisterous, vehement conversion, that extremity of pangs and horror in the new birth, which sometimes are to be found in some others, let him ponder upon these resemblances:—

(1.) Thou mayest have thy bile or botch opened with the point of a needle, whereas another man endures the slashing of a surgeon's lancet; yet, if the corruption and purrified matter be let out by this easier means, and thyself

thereby thoroughly cured, I hope thou hast no great cause to complain. It may be so in the present point.

(2.) Two sons are punished for their offence; the one cries, and roars, and grieves extraordinarily; the other makes no great noise, but resolves silently with himself, and in sincerity, upon a new course as well as the former. Is not the change and reformation of them both equally welcome and accepted of the father, who only aims at and expects their amendment?

(3.) Two malefactors, equally guilty of high treason, both apprehend their danger, acknowledge that they are utterly undone, hold themselves for dead men; to the one a pardon comes, not yet cast, condemned, or carried to the place of execution; to the other, ready to lay down his head upon the block. There is great difference in all likelihood in their terrors and dejections; but they have equal parts in the pardon, and both their lives are saved.

(4.) Two men are arrived at their wished-for port: the one was tossed with many roaring tempests and raging waves; the other hath a reasonably calm passage. Howsoever they now stand both safe upon the shore, and have both escaped destruction and drowning in that great merciless devouring gulf.

(5.) Suppose a man dead for some days, and then revived; he perceives his change with a witness; another is not so, but himself only alive walks amongst a multitude of dead men; he also may clearly enough see the difference, and both acknowledge and praise God for his life\*.

Yet for conclusion, let all those who have passed through the pangs of the new-birth not so terribly, but more tolerably, especially having been formerly notorious, take counsel and be advised to ply more carefully the great and gracious work of humiliation still, to "humble themselves in the sight of the Lord" yet more and more unto their dying day. The humblest Christians are ever highest in favour

\* Those who are so happy, as by the benefit of religious parents, a godly family, good education under powerful means, have never entered upon any notoriousness, but by God's blessing upon those means have sucked in grace in their younger years, as is said of Timothy; and such also as after a profane course have been turned unto God somewhat more easily than ordinary; and so both complain of the want of that testimony of terrible pangs in their conversion, which they hear others talk of; yet, I say, being now upright-hearted, and in the holy path, they may take comfort by comparing themselves with and casting their eyes upon a world of unregenerate people about them, from which by the mercies of God they differ as far as living men from a number of rotten dead carcasses; and so may assure themselves of soundness.

and nearest in familiarity with Almighty God. They are, as it were, his second royal throne, wherein he sweetly dwells and delights. See Isa. lvii, 15, and lxvi, 1, 2; Psalm xxxiv, 18, and li, 17. And they are also of the most sweet, amiable, and inoffensive carriage amongst the people of God. Hear that excellent artist in the spiritual anatomy of man's deceitful heart\*, "Humiliation is the procurer of all other graces. 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble' (1 Pet. v, 5); and it is the preserver of grace procured; and therefore compared to a strong foundation, upholding the building against the force of wind and weather. Only those streams of grace hold out that flow out of the troubled fountain of a bruised spirit. An unhumbled professor quickly starts back, even as a broken egg or chesnut leaps out of the fire. Grace is nowhere safe, but in a sound and honest heart. Now, only the humble heart is the honest heart. Only a rent and broken heart is a whole and sound heart. The dross cannot be purged out of the gold but by melting; crooked things cannot be straightened but by wringing. Now, humiliation is that which wrings and melts us, and makes us of drossy, pure; of crooked, straight and upright; and so, sound, durable, and persevering Christians."

And let them consider and examine whether neglect of this holy endeavour I now exhort them to, may not bring upon them much spiritual misery; whether they may not therefore be the rather exposed; first, to many irksome intrusions of very vexing doubts and fears, and slavish questionings of the truth and soundness of their conversion all their life long. Secondly, To much deadness of affection and listlessness; many damps and distempers in the performance of holy duties, use of the ordinances, and religious exercises. Thirdly, to greater variety of crosses and a heavier hand upon their outward states, purposely to bring the eye of their conscience to look back more heavily and with heartier remorse upon the loathsomeness and filth of their youthful folly. Fourthly, to more easiness of re-entry and surprise by the assaults and insinuations of old sins in their unregenerate time, especially that of the bosom, which is a horrible thing. For the less sins are sorrowed for, the sooner do they re-ensnare us with their sensual delight, and repollute with renewed acts. Fifthly, to the entertainment, at least for a time, of uncomfortable and scandalous giddiness and some fantastical tenets of new

\* Dyke, in his Treatise on Repentance, chap. v.

and naughty opinions, which many times fearfully infect our chiefest city; and some proud companions and ignorant teachers there and elsewhere, are ever ready to lay hold upon; whom you may ordinarily discern by their luciferian pride and lewd tongues, to the great hurt and hindrance of the power of godliness, holy obedience to the blessed law of God, and humble walking with him; if any will be so miserable and mad as to listen to such petty and paltry trash, idle and cheating dreams, contrary to the doctrine which they have learned, or should have learned (for these fellows were never well catechized); if professors will be children still, "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," which God forbid. For if it be possible that any true heart be entangled, I hope he will quickly in cool blood disensnare himself. As these tare-sowers themselves are ordinarily very superficial in ministerial abilities; so, for the most part, their disciples are only the foolish virgins and unsound professors of the places through which they pass. Sixthly, to danger of some future grievous desertion, extraordinary temptations, or revisitation with far greater terrors than they tasted at their first turning into the ways of God, &c.

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## CHAP. XI.

The Fourth Malady. Two Causes of this Malady.

IN a fourth place, I come to spiritual desertion, which puts the Christian for the present into a most dark and uncomfortable condition; I mean, when the most wise God, for some holy ends, seeming good unto himself, retires for a time, and withholds from the heart of his child the light of his countenance, the beams of his favour, and sense of his love. Whereupon, though the root of spiritual life, the habit of faith and fundamental power of salvation and eternal safety remain still and sure in his soul, never to be shaken or prevailed against, no, not by the very gates of hell, or concurrent forces and fury of all the powers of darkness; yet for the time he finds and feels in himself a fearful deprivation and discontinuance of the feeling and fruition of God's pleased face, exercise of faith, pardon of sin, inward peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, cheerfulness in well-doing and godly duties, confidence in prayer, assurance of

being in a saving state, &c. ; so that he may judge himself to have been formerly a hypocrite\* ; and for the present can very hardly, or not at all, distinguish his woful condition from that of a cast-away. This secret and wonderful work of spiritual desertion doth God much exercise and practise upon his children in many cases, for many causes.

1. Sometimes upon a re-ensnarement in some secret bosom lust, which was their darling and delight in the days of their rebellion, relapse into which Satan labours industriously to procure by all his devices ; for he gains greatly thereby. For so the new convert, considering in cool blood what he hath done, may be cast upon such complaints as these :—Alas ! what have I done now ? This pestilent old pollution, which so wofully wasted my conscience in time past, hath fearfully reinfected my newly-washed soul. I have again, woe is me ! fallen into the abhorred pit of this foul sin, I have grieved that good Spirit which was lately come to dwell in me. All the former horrors charge afresh upon my heart, from which I was happily freed even by some glimpses of heavenly joy. I have wretchedly let go my hold, lost my peace, broke my vows, and blessed communion with my God. Ah ! wretch that I am ; what shall I do ? And thereupon may fall upon a temptation of returning to his disavowed sensual delights, out of the conceit, that whatever he may do cannot make him worse than he is. Do what I can, I see I can never hold out, &c. (Or he may plunge into the slavish perplexity—I dare not go to God, I have used him so villanously after such immeasurable kindness ; and provoked the “ eyes of his glory ” with such prodigious impurity, after I was purged. I dare not fall again to good-fellowship and former courses, lest I draw some remarkable vengeance upon me now, and be certainly damned at last. So that he can neither take pleasure upon the right hand or the left : or, which is most for my purpose, and that which the devil specially desires, God therefore may hide his face from him, and leave him to the darkness of his own spirit, so that he may for a long time

\* But how is it possible that he should entertain any such thought, since he knows in his own heart that he hath formerly made conscience of avoiding all sin, and laboured to please God in all things, which are infallible notes of a new man ? In height and heat of temptation, he may think that all the good he did was in pride and hypocrisy. So did one whom I might name, think that he forbore sin only for slavish fear. So did another, and yet the darkness of his horror and error being dispersed, he comes again to himself, and sees clearly, that, though with much weakness, yet he did both the one and the other in sincerity ; as did both these blessed saints of God afterward.

walk on heavily and lame, in respect of those comfortable supporters of the soul, affiance, hope, spiritual joy, peace of conscience, sense of God's favour, boldness in his ways, courage in good causes, delight in the company of the saints, &c. Such a damp, also, and desertion may come upon the soul, especially after a fall into some new open, scandalous sin, whereby not only their own consciences within are grievously wounded, but also for their sakes and sin, the profession of God's truth abroad scandalized and disgraced, the common state of godness questioned and traduced, the heart and glory of Christianity hurt and dis-tained.

David was thus dealt with in God's just judgment, after his monstrous and matchless\* fall. God's good Spirit had richly crowned his royal heart with abundance of sanctification and purity, and had graciously filled him aforetime with the fruits and feeling thereof, and thereupon many heavenly dews, no doubt, of spiritual joys had many times sweetly refreshed his blessed soul; but by the heinous scandalousness of his hateful fall he so grieved that good Spirit, and turned the face of God from him, that he had neither sense of the comforts of the one, nor of the favour of the other. The spiritual life of his soul, the eye of his judgment, light of conscience, lightsomeness in the Holy Ghost, and the whole grace of sanctification, were so wasted, dazzled, confounded, weakened, raked under the ashes, as it were, and run into the root, that he speaks as if he had utterly lost them, and so stood in need of a new infusion and creation thereof (Psalm li, 10). But, by the way, conceive aright of David's spiritual condition at this time. Though in his own feeling and present apprehension he so complains and cries out for a new creation, as though all were gone; yet even when he was at the lowest and worst, the soul and substance, if I may so speak, of saving grace and salvation did abide still rooted and resident in his heart; which once implanted by God's omnipotent merciful hand in a humble soul, and taking root, it there sticks fast for ever, far more immoveable than a thousand Mount Zions. The blossoms, buds, and fruits may sometimes be foully cankered, as it were, by our own corruptions, shrewdly nipped by the frost of some earthly affections, blasted by sharper tempests of Satan's temptations: but the foundation standeth sure, grounded and founded upon the unchangeable nature of God, and immutability of his counsel; and therefore in

\* I mean, he being God's dear child.

spite of the malice of all, both mortal and immortal rage, there is still life in the root, which in due season will spring out again and grow up to everlasting life.

In the present instance, all purity and cleanness of heart was not utterly extinguished and abolished in David: for,

(1.) Some little at least was left, which descried and discovered those spots and pollutions of filthiness and impurity which had lately overgrown it. For grace discovers corruption, not nature. A sensible complaint of hardness of heart, and an earnest desire after softness, is a sign that the heart is not wholly hard. A sincere crying out against impurity, and hearty endeavours after purity, argues the presence of the purifying Spirit!

(2.) And how was this holy ejaculation, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," created, but by the Spirit of grace and supplications? Which blessed sanctifying Spirit was all the while rooted and resident in David's heart, by a saving existence there, though not so fully by an effectual operation and exercise. Divines about this point consider: First, The infinite, free, and eternal love and favour towards his child, with which whom he loves once, he loves for ever. The gifts and calling of God; that is, as best interpreters affirm, the gifts of effectual calling, effects of his free grace, are such as God never repenteth of, or taketh away. Secondly; His sanctifying Spirit, which he gives unto him. Thirdly; The habits of graces created in his heart by that blessed Spirit, justification, regeneration, adoption. Fourthly; The feeling exercises and acts of those graces, with many sweet and glorious refreshings of spiritual joy springing thence. The three first, after we be once Christ's, are ours for ever, the last may be suspended, and cease for a time.

(3.) By way of interpretation, in the latter part of the verse he calleth the creation of the grace of sanctification in his heart, a renovation and raising thereof to the same degree wherein it was in former time.

(4.) He cries unto the Lord, "Not to take his holy Spirit from him" (ver. 11); and therefore that blessed Spirit was not gone. It were very absurd and incongruous to desire the not taking away of that thing which we have not. He certainly hath the Holy Spirit, who heartily desires he may not be taken away from him.

David's desire then of a clean heart did not argue that it was utterly unclean, and wholly turned into a lump of filth (Sanctity and cleanness of heart is never wholly extinguished in any one once truly sanctified, it was not in

David, nor in Peter). But he was so earnest after it: First, because that little which was left, was scarcely or not at all sensible in his spiritual distress. Where the glory of the sun hath lately been, the succession of a candle's light is little worth. Secondly, and because now he vehemently thirsteth after a great deal more than he at present had. Learned and rich men think themselves not learned and rich in respect of what they desire. When the sun begins to peep up, we gaze no longer at stars. God's comforting Spirit began a little to warm his heart again, whereupon he grew so eager and greedy of that heavenly heat, that he thinks his heart key-cold, except it flame to the height. That damp and darkness of spirit into which he was fallen by reason of his grievous fall, had so frozen his affections with disconsolate deadness and heaviness of heart, that a little glimpse of spiritual life and lightness is presently swallowed up as it were, and devoured; and serves only to set an edge to his desire, to whet his stomach, and stir up his appetite after a more full and further fruition of those comfortable graces and wonted communion with his God, a retaste and return whereof is so sweet and dear unto his soul.

Take heed then that you do not mistake. When I speak of a spiritual desertion, I mean it not either in respect of a total or final dereliction and forsaking on God's part, or a total and final falling away on the saint's side; to hold such an apostasy were a fearful apostasy; but only in respect of the exercise and operation of grace, of present sense and feeling, as I said before. Life lies still in the root; and upon the first breaking out of the heavenly and healing beams upon the soul from the sun of righteousness returning in mercy, puts forth again and prospers. David being astonished with a mighty blow of temptation (as Bernard resembles it), lay for a time, as it were, in a swoon; but upon the voice of the prophet, sounding in his ear, he awakened and came to himself. As we see in heated water, the air's blowing upon it doth recover and reduce it to its former natural coldness, by the aid of that little remainder of refrigerating power which is originally rooted in that element: so by the awaking of the north wind and coming of the south, I mean the blessed Spirit's breathing afresh upon David's heart, scorched dangerously with the fire of lust, by stirring up and refreshing the retired and radical power of grace, that immortal seed of God, never to be lost, did sweetly and graciously bring it again to its former spiritual, comfortable temper and constitution.

2. Sometimes the Lord may for a time withdraw the

light of his countenance and sense of his graces from his child, that he may be driven thereby to take a new and more exact review, a most serious thorough survey of his youthful sins, of that dark time which he wholly spent upon the devil; and so put again, as it were, into the pangs of his new-birth, that Christ may be more perfectly formed in him, that he may again behold with fear and trembling the extreme loathsomeness and aggravated guilt of his old abominable lusts; and so renewing his sorrow and repairing repentance, grow into a further detestation of them, a more absolute divorce from his insinuating bosom sin, and be happily frightened afresh and for ever from the very garment spotted of the flesh, and all appearance of evil. That upon this occasion he may make a new inquisition and deeper search into the whole state of his conscience, several passages of his conversation, and every corner of his heart; and so for the time to come more carefully cut off all occasion of sin, and with more resolution and watchfulness oppose and stand at stove's end with every lust, passion, distraction in holy duties, enticements to relapse, spiritual laziness, lukewarmness, worldliness, &c. with greater severity to crucify our corruptions, and ever presently and impartially execute the law of the Spirit against the rebellions of the flesh.

This it may seem was one end of Job's spiritual affliction in this kind. In chap. xiii, 23, he is earnest and importunate with God to know what be those iniquities, transgressions, and sins, which had turned his face and favour from him in that fearful manner, as though he was a mere stranger, or rather a professed enemy unto his majesty. And he presently apprehends the burthen and bitterness of the iniquities of his youth. "Thou writest," saith he, "bitter things against me, and makest me possess the iniquities of my youth. At all such times, when God thus hides his face from us, and leaves us to the darkness of our own spirits, the sins of our youth are wont to lie most heavy upon our hearts, and exact at our hands a more special renewing, increase, and perfecting of penitent sorrow; for they are acted with the very strength of corruption, in the heat of sensuality and height of rebellion. Hence it was that even David himself cries out, "Remember not the sins of my youth" (Psalm xxv, 7); and so do many more many times with much bitterness of spirit.

It is so, then, that God may deal thus in mercy even with his dearest servants, especially if penitent grief and trouble of conscience in their conversation were not in some good measure answerable to their former abominable

life and sinful provocations ; if they have been extraordinary sinners, and but ordinary sorrowers for sin ; if they were formerly furious in the service of Satan, and now but something faint-hearted in standing on God's side ; if heretofore they marched impetuously like Jehu in the pursuit of earthly pleasures, and now creep but slowly forward in the ways of God ; or if they begin to look back again with some uncontrolled glances after disavowed delights and abandoned company, &c. — I say, in such cases the Lord may withdraw himself in displeasure ; leave them for a time to the terrors of their own hearts ; all their old sins may return to the eye of their consciences as unremitted, &c. ; that so their regeneration may be, as it were, regenerated, their new birth new born, their sins new sorrowed for, the hatefulfulness and horror of their youthful pollutions more hated and abhorred ; and in conclusion (for all the work and ways of God with his chosen are ever in love and for their good), that the storm being dispersed, the comfortable beams of Divine favour may shine more amiably upon them than ever before, and by the effectual stirring again, and stronger influence of the spiritual life, that was hid in the heart for a season, may sprout out fresh, spring, and spread abroad more flourishingly and fruitfully for ever afterward.

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## CHAP. XII.

Four Cases more of the former Malady.

3. For trial, quickening, and exercise of spiritual graces, that they may put forth themselves with more power, improvement, and illustriousness. The cold comfort of a desertion in this case being unto them as water cast upon the smith's forge to make some of them especially to burn inwardly, as it were, with more intensity and heat, and all afterward to break out and flame more gloriously. There are many gracious dispositions and endowments in the Christian's heart which would never see the light, at least with such eminency, were it not for this darkness. The brightness of lamps languishes in the light, but they shine clear in the dark : the splendour and beauty of the stars would never appear were there no night. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job," saith James (chap. v, 11) ; and we read also of his excellent faith, when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job xiii, 15) ; but

we had neither heard of nor admired the one nor the other, had he not been afflicted both with outward troubles and inward terror. It is the highest and most heroical act of faith, and it is improved to the utmost, and shown to be armour of proof, to "trust in the name of the Lord and to stay upon our God when we walk in darkness and have no light" (Isa. 1, 10). God is best pleased and most honoured when we rest upon him without any sensible comfort. I make no doubt but that admirable ejaculation of Job, "Though he slay me," &c., did hold scale in God's acceptation with all those innocencies, integrities, and gracious conformities to his holy law (blessed fruits, I confess, of his invincible faith) enumerated chap. xxxi; nay, did incomparably overweigh them. Abraham's believing against hope was far above and of infinitely more worth with God than the sacrifice of his son, or all his other glorious services. It is no such great matter or mastery to be confident when we are encouraged and hired, as it were, with joy and peace in believing; but to stick to Christ and his sure word when we have against us sense and reason, flesh and blood, fears and feeling, heaven and earth, and all creatures, that is the faith indeed, there is its excellency, there is the true and orient sparkling and splendour of that heavenly jewel. That prayer is truly fervent, fullest of spirit, and enforced with most unutterable groans, which is poured out for the recovery of God's pleased countenance after it hath been turned away from us for a time. That love is most industrious and mighty, groweth strong as death and into a "most vehement flame," which is enkindled in the upright soul, when her dearest love is departed in respect of feeling and fruition. Oh! then she prizeth and praiseth his spiritual beauty and excellency as one exceedingly "sick of love," &c., grieves and laments extremely: as you may see, Cant. v, 6—11. "I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; my soul failed when he spake. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love. What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us? My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold," &c. That thankfulness which springs from a sensible re-

enjoyment of Jesus Christ, and return of the sense of the savour of his good ointments into the soul, hath far more heart and life than the free and full possession of all the visible glory and outward comfort of the whole world could possibly put into it. That joy which makes our hearts leap within us upon the regaining of the wonted workings of grace, and our heavenly feelings, is much more joyful than either that which followed the first taste, or the after-free enjoyment of them. Excellent and extraordinary good things tasted and lost, beget a far greater sense of their sweetness and comfort upon their recovery than if they had been either never tasted or never lost. That sun-shine is most fair and amiable which breaks out after some boisterous storm, or great eclipse. Restitution to sense of grace after some despairful sadness for God's departure, may produce a deeper impression of spiritual pleasure in the recovered patient, than the first plantation of it. Thus doth our gracious God, who when he pleases can bring light out of darkness, life out of death, something out of nothing, heaven out of hell, even come nearer unto us by departing from us. By the dead winter-time of a spiritual desertion he may bring, by his blessed hand of mercy and quickening influence, more strength, activeness, lively exercise, and excellency into our graces and sweetest fruits thereof.

4. The Christian as he grows in knowledge, grace, spiritual abilities, forwardness, fruitfulness, and further from his new birth, except he be very watchful over his heart, much practised in the exercises of humiliation, often exercised in the school of afflictions, terrified sometimes with hideous injections, and walk humbly with his God, shall have, by a sly and insensible insinuation, privy pride to grow upon him, confidence in his own strength, too much attribution to the means, a self-conceit of an independent standing upon his own bottom, as it were, and by the power of his present graces; and therefore our wise God doth sometimes take a course to take down his self-confidence by withdrawing his countenance, and to humble his spiritual presumption with a spiritual desertion; I mean, by taking from him the sense of grace and feeling of his favour, by cutting off, as it were, for a time those streams of comfort which were wont to distil upon his soul by use and ordinary influence of the means, meditation, prayer, conference, public ministry, sabbaths, sacraments, days of humiliation and such like, doth mercifully force him to have recourse unto at length, with much longing and thirst, and to repose upon with more reverence and acknowledgment, the everlasting fountain and founder of all graces, comforts, compassions, and life;

even his own glorious, merciful, and almighty self. See this in the beginning of the third chapter of the Canticles. At the latter end of chap. ii, the Christian soul is sweetly crowned with a glorious overflowing confluence of all spiritual consolations, rapt extraordinarily with unutterable and joyful ravishment of spirit upon the nearer embracement of her dearest spouse, and more sensible grasping of refreshing graces. She lies so peacefully in his arms of mercy, and under the banner of his love, that she sweetly sings unto herself, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." But in the beginning of the third (for the days of God's child, after conversion, are like the days of the year; some fair and shining, some tempestuous and cloudy; some happy with heavenly honey dews, as it were, of unspeakable joy and inconceivable peace, others more dismal and disastrous, if I may so speak, for want of an amiable aspect from the throne of grace); I say, a little after, {the case is fearfully altered with her: for she lies struggling and distressed in the irksome and comfortless desolations of a spiritual desertion. Her spouse is gone, the very heart and life, all her lightsomeness in this world and in the world to come. No sense now of the "savour of his good ointments;" no feeling of the assurance of his favour; nothing left of all that former heaven, but only a sad and woful heart, which had been happy. In this rueful case, she casts about for recovery of her wonted comfort; assays those means which were accustomed to convey unto her with joy fresh streams and strength from time to time "out of the wells of salvation."

First. She seeks her spouse and former refreshings of spirit by secret prayer, meditation, experimental considerations, calling to mind former assurances of his love, reflecting upon the footsteps of a saving work, unfeigned change and sweet communion with him aforesaid, and other silent self-inquisitions and inward exercises of the heart. "But she found him not." (ver. 1.)

Secondly. She inquires abroad, and hath recourse unto godly Christians, especially such as have been most exercised and best acquainted with trials, temptations, and mysteries of the holy way; to see if she can get any comfort, any new hold and hope by their counsel, prayers, instructions out of their own experience (for in such cases God's children may and ought to confess their sins and God's dealing with them one unto another, and pray one for another). But she finds none (ver. 2).

Thirdly. She addresses herself and resorts to faithful ministers, God's public agents in the church, about the

affairs of heaven and salvation of souls, to receive from them some light and direction to regain her love; but it will not yet be (ver. 3). No comfort comes by all or any of these means; no feeling of God's favour and former peace for all this various and solicitous seeking and pursuit. For God may sometimes purposely restrain his quickening influence from the means, and recal as it were to the well-head those refreshing rivers of comfort, which ordinarily flow through his own holy ordinances as so many blessed conduits of grace into humble hearts; that we may fetch them more immediately from the fountain, the boundless sea of all heavenly treasures and true peace, and so with more humility, sense of self-emptiness, reverence, and praise, acknowledge from whence we have them.

"It was but a little that I passed from them," saith the deserted soul, "but I found him whom my soul loveth" (ver. 4). When no means would bring him, but that she had passed through the use and exercise of them all, and he would not be found; he after, at length, comes upon his own compassionate accord, and enlightens her dark and disconsolate state with the shining beams of his glorious presence, and fills her plentifully with joy and believing again; that so no use, variety, and excellency of means, but his own free mercy and goodness, might be crowned with the glory of it.

Let every Christian, by the way, take notice of and treasure up this point; it may serve him in some spiritual extremity hereafter. God may sometimes withdraw and delay his comfort, to draw his children through all the means, which when they have passed without prevailing, he after (and immediately when he so pleases) puts to his helping hand, that they may not attribute it to the means, though never so excellent, but to the mercies of God, the only well-spring both of the first plantation, continuance, and everlastingness of all spiritual graces and true comforts in all those happy ones which shall be saved.

Why doth the Lord let us use all the means, and yet not find him in them?

That we may know he only cometh when he will, nothing moving him but his own good pleasure.

Fifthly. The world sometimes, that mighty enemy to the kingdom of Christ, aided underhand by the covetous corruption of our false heart and the devil's craft (for ordinarily in all assaults and overthrows Satan is the bellows, the world the wildfire, our corruptions the tinder, and the precious souls of men those goodly frames which are fearfully set on fire and blown up), doth wrestle so desperately

even with some of Christ's champions, that surprising their watch, cooling the fervour of their first love, and stealing away by little and little their spiritual strength, it supplants them at length and throws them upon the earth; whereon it labours might and main to keep them down and doating, that so they may root in the mud and mire thereof, to the great disgrace of divine pleasures, their high and excellent calling, and so raising the spirit of railing in unregenerate men to cast unworthy aspersions upon the glory of profession, for their sakes. Nay, too often by its subtle insinuations and syren's songs, it lulls them so long upon her lap that they are cast into a heavy slumber even of carnal security. And that so deep and dangerously, that though the Lord Jesus, the beloved of their soul, cry aloud in their ears by the shrill and piercing sound of his spiritual trumpeters, and by the more immediate and inward motions of his Holy Spirit, entreat them fairly upon all loves for his own dear passion's sake, and all those bloody sufferings, to shake off that carnal drowsiness, and to delight again in God; to let the earth fall out of their minds, and again to mind heavenly things — "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night" (Cant. v, 2): — Yet for all this, full loath they are to leave their beds of ease, and therefore frame many shifts, excuses, and delays to pass by and put off these compassionate calls of love and merciful importunities: "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" (ver. 3.) Whereupon their blessed spouse, so unworthily repelled with some notorious unkindness and ingratitude, scattering only in their hearts some sense and glimmerings of his spiritual sweetness and beauty, to breed the more shame and sorrow for so foul neglect, departeth from them for a time, withdraws the life and lightsomeness of his gracious presence, hides, as it were, in an angry cloud, the comfortable beams of his former favour, and so leaves them to the darkness of their own spirits, and in the comfortless damp of a justly-deserved desertion, that thereby they may be schooled to prize Jesus Christ before gold and silver, and to prefer, as is most meet, one glimpse of his pleased face before the splendour of all earthly imperial crowns; to listen with more reverence, cheerfulness, profit, and holy greediness to his heavenly voice in the ministry of the word, and to make more dear account of godly comforts when they shall recover and re-enjoy them. For the purpose we may find (Cant. v) the Christian soul laid too soft and lazily upon the bed of ease and earthly-mindedness, and slipt into a slumber of security

and self-love (ver. 2). Her well-beloved knocks and calls upon her; nay, bespeaks and entreats upon all the terms of dearest love, and for his painful sufferings' sake, to rise and open unto him. But she most unworthily puts him off with some slight excuses and delays of sloth (ver. 3); whereupon he drops into her heart some taste of his "sweetest ointments," to set her affections on edge and eagerness after him (ver. 4, 5), and so departs and leaves her in sad and solitary grief for driving away her dearest, by such intolerable unkindness and shameful neglect (ver. 6); which perplexity and trouble of spirit for his departure begets in her a great deal of zeal, fervency, and patience to follow after him (ver. 7, 8), an extraordinary admiration of his amiable excellencies and heavenly fairness (ver. 10, &c.), and no doubt a far nearer embracement and dearest esteem of him upon his return, and enjoyment of a more full, blessed communion with him again (chap. vi, 3).

Sixthly, The graces of salvation are the most precious and costly things that ever issued out of the hands of God by creation. The dearest of his infinite mercies, the heart's blood of his Son, the noblest work of his blessed Spirit, do all sweetly concur movingly, meritoriously, efficiently to the production of them. No marvel then though it be right pleasing unto God that such rare and inestimable jewels should be rightly prized and holden in highest esteem by those that have them; that they should still appear and present themselves to those souls wherein they shine in their true excellency, orient fairness, and native beauty. Now privation of excellent things hath special power to raise our imaginations to a higher strain of estimation of them, and to cause us at their return to entertain them with much more longing, far dearer apprehensions and embracement. Absence and intermission of the most desirable comforts add a great deal of life to the love of them, and weight of preciousness to their valuation. The goodness of whatsoever we enjoy is better perceived by vicissitude of want than continual fruition. Sleep is more sweet after the tediousness of some wakeful and wearisome nights; liberty and enjoyment of the free air and faces of men after restraint and imprisonment; the glory and fairness of the sun after a black day or boisterous storm, &c. So God's favourable aspect is much more acceptable after an angry tempest and hiding his face for a season, and the graces of salvation far more amiable and admirable to the eye of his humbled child, after the darkness of a spiritual desertion. Wherefore our gracious God doth many times in great mercy and wisdom deprive his dearest servants for a time of the pre-

sence of their spouse, the assurance of his love, and sense of those graces, that the absence thereof may represent the glory of such an incomparable happiness and those heavenly pearls more to the life; and discontinuance of their enjoyment may inflame and affect their hearts with more holy greediness and eager pursuit after them, and stir up in them that height of esteem and heat of love, which may in some good measure be answerable to their invaluable excellency and sweetness. Such a dulness of heart, deadness of affections, and declination to the world, may grow sometimes upon a good man, that he may find little more contentment in communion with Jesus Christ than in the prosperity of his outward affairs, which is infinitely unworthy a heir of heaven. But now in such a case, let God make him but to repossess the iniquities of his youth, and fight against him with all his terrors for a while, and the same man with all his heart will prefer the reconciled face of God and peace of conscience, before the sovereignty and sole command of all the kingdoms upon earth. While we have a free and uninterrupted recourse unto the throne of grace, we are apt to undervalue and to conceive of that mighty grace of prayer, but as of an ordinary gift; but if once the Lord please to leave us to that confusion and astonishment of spirit, that our ejaculations do sadly rebound upon our heavy and unheated hearts without answer or encouragement from heaven, we shall easily then acknowledge the spirit and power of prayer to be one of the fairest flowers in the garland of all our graces, the very arm of God to do miracles for us many times, and ever to settle our troubled souls in sweetest peace and patience amidst the greatest pressures and persecutions, either of hellish or earthly enemies.

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### CHAP. XIII.

Two more Causes of the former Malady.

SEVENTHLY. JESUS Christ himself, blessed for ever, drank full deep of the extremity and variety of sorest sufferings in many kinds, not only to deliver his people from the "vengeance of eterna<sup>l</sup> fire," but also lovingly to learn out of the sense of that sympathy and self-feeling to show himself tender-hearted, kind, and compassionate unto them in all their extremities, and never to suffer them to sink in any trouble or affliction, though never so full of desperate representa-

tions or apprehensions of impossibility to escape, or to be tempted at any time above their power and patience. And many are the means and methods by which he is wont to ease and mitigate their many painful miseries, especially that extremest one of martyrdom. 1. Sometimes he rescues them by his own mighty and immediate arm out of the mouth of lions, and pulls them by a strong hand from between the teeth of bloody persecuting wolves (2 Tim. iv, 17). 2. Sometimes he takes away or lessens the sting and fury of the torment and torturers\*. The fire had no force at all over the bodies of those blessed men in Dan. iii, 27. And no doubt in Queen Mary's days, of most abhorred memory, he many times mollified and sweetened the rage and bitterness of those merciless flames for our martyrs' sakes. 3. Sometimes he supports and supplies them with supernatural vigour and extraordinary courage over the smart and rigour of the most terrible and intolerable tortures. The heart of that holy protomartyr, Stephen, was furnished and filled with those heavenly infusions of spiritual strength and joy, when "the heavens opening, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on his right hand" (Acts vii, 55, 56), which were gloriously transcending and triumphant over the utmost of all corporeal pain and Jewish cruelty. And so graciously dealt he with many other martyrs in succeeding ages, as we may read in ecclesiastical history. 4. He may sometimes also, out of his merciful wisdom, put into their hearts so much of heaven beforehand, and ravishing comforts of the world to come, that the excess thereof doth swallow up and devour, as it were, the bitterness of all bodily inflictions and sufferings of sense. Thus mercifully dealt he with that worthy martyr, Robert Glover, even when he was going towards the stake. He poured into his soul upon the sudden such overflowing rivers of spiritual joys, that no doubt they mightily abated and quenched the raging fury of those popish flames wherein he was sacrificed for the profession of the gospel of Christ and God's everlasting truth. And assuredly that comfortable sunshine of inexpressible joy, which by the good hand of God was shed into Mr. Peacock's sorrowful heart in the depth of his darkness and desertion a little before the resignation of his happy soul into the hands of God, did make the pangs of death and that dreadful passage a great deal less painful and sensible, if not very lightsome and pleasant. Now in both these men

\* Let no Christian, then, afflict his soul with any corroding or vexing forethought of fiery times. Assure thyself, if God call thee to suffer in that kind, he will graciously give unto thee a martyr's faith, a martyr's patience, and a crown of martyrdom.

of God a woful spiritual dereliction was a fit introduction and immediate preparative to the effusion of such a sudden torrent of strange exultations and ravishment of spirit upon their sad and heavy hearts. Conceive the point then thus : The Lord sometimes even in tenderness and love to his own dear children, whom he designs for extraordinary sufferings, may purposely possess them with such a paradise of divine pleasures as a counter-comfort to the extremity of their pains ; that, besides their own private refreshing and support, their courageous insensibility and victorious patience thereupon may bring a great deal of terror to their tormentors, glory to their merciful Master, credit unto the cause, and confusion to the enemies of grace. And that there may be an addition of more heart and life to such joyful elevations of spirit, and that he may make the excellency of that spiritual joy proportionable to the exquisiteness of their tortures and trouble, he may in his unsearchable wisdom make way thereunto by a spiritual desertion, as he did in the fore-named glorious martyr, Robert Glover. For want of the sense of the comforts of godliness for a season, doth make our souls a thousand times more sensible of their sweetness upon their reinfusion.

Eighthly. Thus may the Lord sometimes deal with his best and dearest children, even by withdrawing the light of his countenance, leave them for a while to these inward conflicts and confusions of spirit, that thereby they may be fitted and informed with a holy experimental skill to speak feelingly and fully to the hearts of their Christian brethren, who may afterwards be tempted and troubled as they have been. For God is wont at all times in his church, so gracious is he, purposely to raise up and single out some special men, whom he instructs and enables in the school of spiritual experience and afflictions of soul, with extraordinary dexterity and art to comfort and recover other mourners in Zion, in their distresses of conscience, stronger temptations, spiritual desertions, decays of grace, relapses, eclipses of God's face and favour, want of former comfortable feelings ; in case of horrible thoughts and hideous injections, darkness of their own spirits, and such other soul vexations. And such a blessed physician, who is able to speak experimentally to a dejected sorrowful heart, out of practice and sense in his own soul, is far more worth, both for a true search and discovery, and sound recovery and cure of a wounded conscience, than a hundred mere speculative divines. Such a one is that one of a thousand spoken of by Job, who can wisely and seasonably declare unto his soul-sick patient the secret tracks and hidden depths of God's

dealing with afflicted spirits. Let us take an instance in those experimental abilities which David gained for such a purpose by his passing through that most grievous spiritual desertion recorded in Psalm lxxvii. The case of that Christian were most rueful, both in his own fearful apprehension, and to the injudicious eye of the beholders, who having spent a long time in a zealous profession of the truth, walking with God, and secret communion with Jesus Christ, should come to that pass, and fall into those woful straits of spiritual trouble, — First, That he should fear, not without extraordinary horror, lest the mercies of God were departed from him for ever, and that the Lord would never more be entreated, or ever shine again with his favourable countenance upon his confounded soul. Secondly, That the very remembrance of God, which was wont to crown his heart with a confluence of all desirable contentments, should even rend it asunder and make it fall to pieces in his bosom like drops of water. Thirdly, That the pouring out of his soul with pitiful groans and complaints in secret unto his God, which heretofore did set wide open unto him heavenly flood-gates of gracious refreshing, should now quite overwhelm his spirit with much distracted amazement and fear. Fourthly, That that heart of his, which had formerly so sweetly tasted those holy pleasures which far pass the comprehension of any carnal apprehension, should now be so brimfull and dammed up with excess of grief, that no vent or passage should be left unto his speech. Fifthly, And which methinks is the perfection of his misery in this kind, that amidst all these heavy discomforts his soul should refuse to be comforted ; that though the ministers and men of God stand round about him, bring into his mind and press upon him the pregnant evidences and testimonies of his own godly life, the unchangeableness of God's never-failing mercies to his people, the sweetness of his glorious name, the sovereign power and mighty price of his Son's blood, the infallible and inviolable preciousness and truth of the promises of life, &c. ; yet in the agony and anguish of his grieved spirit he puts them all away from him as none of his, nor as properly belonging to his present state. He is readier out of his spiritual distemper to spill, as water upon the ground, the golden vials of the water of life, and sovereign oils of evangelical joy tendered unto him by the physician of his soul, than to receive them with wonted thirst and thankfulness into the bruised bosom of his bleeding conscience. Though they assure him in the word of life and truth, having had (for that I must suppose) true and sound experience of his conversion and former sanctified

courses, from Isa. xlv, 22, that as the heat and strength of the summer's sun doth disperse and dissolve to nothing a thick mist, or foggy cloud, so the inflamed zeal of God's tender love through the bloodshed of his own only dear Son hath done away all his offences, his iniquity, transgression, and sin, as though they had never been: and, Micah vii, 19, that that God which "delighteth in mercy" (ver. 18) hath cast all his sins into the bottom of the sea, never to rise again, either in this world or the world to come. The prophet alludes to the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea; and therefore they assure him, that as that mighty host sunk down to the bottom like a stone (Exod. xv, 5), or as lead (ver. 10), so that neither the sun of heaven nor son of man ever saw their faces any more, so certainly all his sins are so swallowed up for ever in the soul-saving sea of his Saviour's blood, that they shall never more appear before the face of God or angel, man or devil, to his damnation or shame. Yet for all this, lying in a spiritual swoon, he finds his heart even key-cold, and as it were stark dead in respect of relishing or receiving all or any of these incomparable comforts. The case thus proposed may seem very deplorable and desperate; yet consider what good David's experience might do in such distress; what a deal of life and light were it able to put into the very darkest damp, and most heartless faintings of such a dying soul, to have such a one as David, even a man after God's own heart, remarkably enriched and eminent with heavenly endowments, one of the highest in the book of life and favour with God, to assure it, that himself had already suffered as grievous things in his soul, if not greater, and passed through the very same passions and pressures of a troubled spirit, if not with more variety and sorer pangs; that proportionably to his present perplexities, he cried out with a most heavy heart—First, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" (Psalm lxxvii, 7, 8, 9.) Secondly; That "when he remembered God he was troubled" (ver. 3). Thirdly; That when he prayed unto God, and "complained, his spirit was overwhelmed." Fourthly; That he "was so troubled that he could not speak" (ver. 4). Fifthly; That "his soul refused to be comforted" (ver. 2), which painful passages of his spiritual desertion answer exactly to the comfortless case of the supposed soul-grieved patient. Nay, and besides assurance of the very sameness in apprehensions of fear and thoughts of horror, David also out of his

own experience and precedency might sweetly inform and direct such a poor panting soul in a comfortable way to come out of the place of dragons and depths of sorrow, by teaching and telling him the manner and means of *his* rising and recovery. Meditations of God's singular goodness and extraordinary mercy to himself, his church, and children aforetime, gave the first lift, as it were, to raise his drooping soul out of the dust. And no doubt ever since the same consideration, by the blessing of God, hath brought again many a bruised spirit from the very gates of hell and brink of despair. And in his happy perusal of ancient times, and God's compassions of old, it is very probable that his memory first met with Adam, a most wonderful and matchless pattern of God's rarest mercies to a most forlorn wretch. For he was wofully guilty by his transgression of casting both himself and all his sons and daughters from the creation to the world's end out of Paradise into the pit of hell, and also of poisoning with the cursed contagion of original corruption, the souls and bodies of all that ever were or shall be born of woman, the Lord Jesus only excepted. And yet this man, as best divines suppose, though he had cast away himself and undone all mankind, was received to mercy. Let never poor soul, then, while the world lasts, upon true and timely repentance, suffer the heinousness and horror of his former sins, whatsoever they have been, to hinder his hopeful access unto the throne of grace, for present pardon of them all; or at any time afterward confound his comfort and confidence in God's gracious promises. Thus, no doubt, the weary soul of this man of God waded further into those bottomless seas of mercies, manifested and made good from time to time upon his servants. His heavy heart might sweetly refresh and repose itself upon the contemplation of God's never-failing compassion in not casting off Aaron everlastingly for his fall into most horrible idolatry; in not suffering the murmuring and rebellious Jews to perish all and utterly in the wilderness, considering their many prodigious provocations and impatiencies, &c. But at length, as we may see in the fore-cited psalm, his soul sets its triumphant *Selah* upon that great and miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea, one of the most glorious and visible miracles of mercy that ever shone from heaven upon the sons of men, and also a blessed type of the salvation of all truly penitent and perplexed souls from the hellish Pharaoh and all infernal powers, in the Red Sea of our Saviour's blood. How fairly now and feelingly might these experimental instructions, and this passage of proof, trodden and marked out by this holy man, enlighten and

conduct any, "that walks in darkness and hath no comfort," out of the like distracted horror of a spiritual desertion? Let him in such a case first cast back his eye upon God's former manifold merciful dealings with himself. If his God made his soul, of the darkest nook of hell, as it were, by reason of its sinfulness and cursedness, as fair and beautiful as the brightest sun-beam by that sovereign blood which gushed out of the heart, and those precious graces which shine upon it from the face of his Son, that never-setting sun of righteousness, he will undoubtedly in due season dispel all those mists of spiritual misery which overshadow the glory and comfort of it for a time. If he upheld him by his merciful hand from sinking into hell when he was a horrible transgressor of all his laws with greediness and delight, he will most certainly (though perhaps for a small moment he hide his face from him) bind up his soul in the bundle of the living for ever; now especially, when he prefers the love and light of his countenance before life, and would not willingly offend him in the least sin for all the world, &c. Let him yet proceed further in David's footsteps, and strengthen his fainting soul with all that heavenly manna of richest mercy which he hath heard, read, or known to have been showered down at any time from the throne of grace into the heavy, humble, and hungry hearts of his afflicted hidden ones. Let him refresh his memory with consideration of David's deliverance by this means from deeper distress, of that most memorable and triumphant resurrection, as it were, and recovery of those three worthy saints of God, Mr. Glover, Mrs. Brettergh, and Mr. Peacock, from greatest extremity in this kind, into most unutterable joyful exultations of spirit. And so of others within the register of his observation, remembrance, and reading. But principally, and above all, let him live and die, let him rest and recreate himself for ever, with surest holdfast and sweetest thoughts upon that heavenly and healing anti-type of the Red Sea, the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. And let him ground upon it, that though Satan with all his hellish hosts and utmost fury pursue his fearful soul like a partridge in the mountains, even to the very brink of despair and mouth of hell, yet even then, when all rescue and deliverance is nearest to be utterly despaired of (for it is the crown of God's glorious mercy to save when the case seems desperate, and there is no hope of human help or possibility of created power to comfort); I say, then that soul-saving sea of his Saviour's heart's-blood will most certainly and seasonably open itself wide unto him, as it did to those above-named blessed saints, and swallow up into

victory, hell, death, the grave, damnation, the present woful desertion, with all other adversary power; and at length make him a fair and pleasant passage through the sweetened pangs of death into the heavenly Canaan, which flows with joys and pleasures unmixed and endless, more than either tongue can tell or heart can think.

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#### CHAP. XIV.

The Ninth and Tenth Causes of the former Malady.

NINTHLY. A spiritual desertion may seem a proportionable, fit, and most proper punishment and means to correct and recover the Christian, who out of infirmity and fear deserts the Lord Jesus and the profession of his blessed truth and gospel. If any be ashamed of him, refuse to do or suffer any thing for his sake, who hath given unto us his own heart's-blood, it is most just that in such a case he withdraw himself in respect of all sense and feeling of Divine favour and fruits of grace, or any comfortable influence at all upon the consciences of such cowards; that so, they being left to the darkness of their own spirits, and by consequence to the taste even of hellish horror for the time, they may be brought again to themselves, and taught by such terrors to return and become infinitely more willing to embrace the stake, if the times should be so cruel, and kiss the instruments of death, than languish any longer in the despairing extremities of such a desertion; to acknowledge it incomparably better to pass through the temporary bitterness of popish fire than to be abandoned to everlasting flames: nay, and that which is the greater hell, to be robbed of and rent from him, in whose glorious presence alone is not only life and all lightsomeness even in this life, but also "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore" in the life to come. This point appears and is proved by God's dealing with some of our martyrs in Queen Mary's time: —

Thomas Whittell, a blessed martyr of Jesus, was by the wicked suggestions of some popish incarnate devils, drawn to subscribe to their hellish doctrine; but considering in cool blood what he had done, was horribly vexed, and as he reports of himself, "felt hell in his conscience and Satan ready to devour him;" which terrible desertion and trouble of mind made him quickly return with great constancy and fortitude, and turn a most invincible and im-

moveable martyr. Hear some passages from his own pen:—

“The night after I had subscribed I was sore grieved, and for sorrow of conscience could not sleep. For in the deliverance of my body out of bonds which I might have had, I could find no joy, nor comfort; but still was in my conscience tormented more and more,” &c.

“And I said (to Harpesfield, &c.), that my conscience had so accused me through the just judgment of God and his word, that I had felt hell in my conscience, and Satan ready to devour me; and therefore I pray you, Mr. Harpesfield, said I, let me have the bill again, for I will not stand to it.”

“When the Lord had led me to hell in my conscience through the respect of his fearful judgments against me for my fearfulness, mistrust, and crafty cloaking in such spiritual and weighty matters, yet he brought me from thence again,” &c.\*

Thirdly. God is many times forced by their frowardness, lukewarmness, worldly-mindedness, cowardliness, self-confidence, falling from their first love, and other such spiritual distempers, to visit and exercise his children with variety and sometimes severity of crosses and corrections; as losses in their outward state, afflictions of body, disgraces upon their good name, oppression by great ones, discomforts in wives, neighbours, friends, children, &c. purposely to put life, quickness, fruitfulness, and forwardness into them, that thereby they may be more gloriously serviceable to himself, more profitable to others, and more provident to treasure up peace unto their own souls against an evil day. “God humbleth us,” saith a worthy divine, “by afflictions, and pricketh the swelling of our pride. He cutteth and loppeth us, to the end we may bring forth the more fruit. He filleth us with bitterness in this life, to the end we might long for the life to come. For those whom God afflicteth grievously in this world, leave it with less grief. He who hath formed us to fear him, knoweth that our prayers are slack and cold in prosperity, as proceeding from a spirit that is cooled by success, and as being only indited by custom. The cries which our own will produced are feeble in comparison of those which grief expresseth. Nothing so ingenious to pray well as sorrow, which in an instant formeth the slowest tongues to a holy eloquence, and furnisheth us with sighs which cannot be

\* Fox's Acts and Monuments. See also in the same book the account of James Abbes and Thomas Benbridge.

expressed." But now many times this physic which pincheth only the body, and wasteth us but in things of this world, doth not so work as he would have it, and therefore he is constrained in love and for our good to proceed to more sharp and searching medicines, to apply more strong and stirring purges, which immediately vex the soul; as horrible and hideous injections, a spiritual desertion, and other affrighting and stinging temptations. He deals with them in this case as Absalom with Joab, when he would not come to him by sending once and again; he causes his servants to set his field of barley on fire, and then there was no need to bid him hasten. When inferior miseries and other means will not do it, God sets as it were their souls on fire with flames of horror in one kind or other, and then they look about them indeed with much care and fear, searching and sincerity: they seek him then to purpose, earnestly and early. For afflictions of soul are very sovereign, and have singular efficacy to stir and quicken extraordinarily, to wean quite from the world, and keep a man close and clinging unto God. How many (though perhaps they think not so) would grow proud, worldly, lukewarm, cold in the use of the ordinances, self-confident, or something that they should not be, if they were not sometimes exercised with injections of terrible thoughts? By this fiery dart the devil desires and endeavours to destroy and undo them quite; but by the mercy of God it is turned to their greater spiritual good. It is in this case as it was with him, "who thrusting his enemy into the body with full purpose to have killed him, lanced the ulcer which no physician was able to cure, and let out that corrupt matter that would have cost him his life." By representation of such horror out of Satan's cruellest malice, they are happily kept more humble, watchful, earnest in prayer, eager after the means, weaned from the world, compassionate to others, &c. Hiding of God's face from him, and leaving him to the darkness of his own spirit, did put and preserve Mr. John Glover in a most zealous, holy, and heavenly life for ever after. Hear the story:—

"This gentleman being called by the light of the Holy Spirit to the knowledge of the Gospel, and having received a wondrous sweet feeling of Christ's heavenly kingdom; his mind after that falling a little to some cogitation of his former affairs, belonging to his vocation, began by and by to misdoubt himself upon occasion of those words, Heb. vi, 4, "For it is impossible," &c. Upon consideration of which words he was so far deserted as to be persuaded that he had sinned against the Holy Ghost; even so much,

that if he had been in the deepest pit of hell, he could almost have despaired no more of his salvation. "Being young (saith Fox), I remember I was once or twice with him, whom partly by his talk I perceived, and partly by mine own eyes saw, to be so worn and consumed by the space of five years, that neither almost any brooking of meat, quietness of sleep, pleasure of life, yea and almost no kind of senses was left in him. Who in such intolerable griefs of mind, although he neither had nor could have any joy of his meat, yet was he compelled to eat against his appetite, to the end to defer the time of his damnation so long as he might, thinking with himself no less, but that he must needs be thrown into hell, the breath being once out of the body. Albeit Christ he thought did pity his case and was sorry for him, yet he could not (as he imagined) help, because of the verity of the word which said, 'It is impossible' &c.\*" But what was the happy issue and effect of those extraordinary spiritual terrors and terrible desertion? The same blessed man of God, who writes the story and was himself with the party, tells us: "Albeit he suffered many years so sharp temptations, and strong buffetings of Satan, yet the Lord who graciously preserved him all the while, not only at last did rid him out of all discomfort, but also framed him thereby to such mortification of life, as the like lightly hath not been seen. In such sort as he, being like one placed in heaven already, and dead in this world, both in word and meditation, led a life altogether celestial, abhorring in his mind all profane doings." Thus a spiritual desertion, or some other affliction of spirit, doth that alone many times, which variety and a long continued succession of ordinary outward crosses, one upon the neck of another, is not able to effect. For troubles of soul sooner take, and are of a quicker and stronger operation, than those which afflict the body. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Prov. xviii, 14. All other afflictions are nothing to this; they are but flea-bitings to the fiery scorpion. The stoutness of a man's spirit will stand under a world of outward miseries many times; but if the eye, which is the light of the body, be in darkness, how great is that darkness? If the spirit itself be crushed, which should support the whole man, how great is the confusion? Hence it was that faithful David waded through a world of troubles; yet all that time no malice of Saul, no hatred of the Philistines, no rebellion of Absalom, no

\* Fox's Acts and Monuments.

treachery of Ahithophel, no grappling with a lion, no fighting with a bear, no threatening of a vaunting Goliath, could so much discourage him. But when at any time he suffered immediately in his soul under the wrath of God, oh! then his very bones, the master-timbers of his body, are broken in pieces. "He roars all the day, and his moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Then he speaks thus unto God: "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth."

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## CHAP. XV.

Two Helps for the curing of a Man troubled with the former Malady.

Thus having discovered the cases and causes of spiritual desertion, I come now to the comforts and the cure.

1. And let us first take notice of a double desertion:—  
 First. Passive, when God withdraws himself from us.  
 Secondly. Active, when we withdraw ourselves from God.  
 And they are both twofold:—1. Temporary; and 2. Final.

1. Passive desertion temporary: as in David (Psalm lxxvii); Heman the Ezrahite (Psalm lxxxviii); Job; both the Glovers; Mrs. Brettergh; Mr. Peacock; and many more of God's children.

2. Final: in many after a woful and wilful abuse of many mercies, means of salvation, and general graces. As Saul, Judas, &c.; such as have outstood all opportunities and seasons of grace; and all those, Prov. i, 24.

(1.) Active desertion temporary; as Solomon, &c.

(2.) Final; as in those, Heb. x.

Now in the present point I understand only a passive temporary desertion; and therefore in that man who is truly engrafted into Christ by a justifying faith, and regenerated, who can never possibly either forsake finally, or be finally forsaken of God. Of whom Hooker thus speaks\*:—"Blessed for ever and ever be that mother's child whose faith hath made him the child of God. The earth may shake; the pillars of the world may tremble under us; the countenance of the heaven may be appalled; the sun may lose his light, the stars their glory; but concerning the man

\* In his Sermon on Habac. i, 4: "Of the certainty and perpetuity of the Faith in the Elect."

that trusteth in God, if the fire hath proclaimed itself unable as much as to singe a hair of his head ; if lions, beasts ravenous by nature and keen with hunger, being set to devour, have, as it were, religiously adored the very flesh of the faithful man ; what is there in the world that shall change his heart, overthrow his faith, alter his affection towards God, or the affection o: God to him ?” Nay, and besides, since I only understand a temporary passive desertion, I must suppose it in him also, who sees full well and doth acknowledge from whence he is fallen, is very sensible of his spiritual loss, afflicted much with the absence of the quickening and comforting influence of grace, and grieved at the heart-root that he cannot do God service, and perform holy duties with that life, power, and light-someness as he was wont ; and thereupon resolves to give no rest unto his discontented soul from cries, complaints, and groans, until God’s face and favour be turned towards him again, and bring with it former feelings and fruitfulness, now so highly prized and heartily prayed for ; which blessed behaviour doth clearly show him to differ from the backslider, a truly miserable and right woful creature indeed, who insensibly falls from his forwardness, first love, intimate fellowship with the saints, all lively use and exercise of the ordinances and divine duties, and yet is never troubled to any purpose, neither doth challenge nor judge himself for it at all. For we are to know, that the presence of spiritual weaknesses, decays, and wants, and absence of due dispositions, accustomed feelings, and former abilities of grace, only then argue a backslider, and are evil signs of a dangerously declining soul, when they are willingly carried without remorse, or taking much to heart without any eager desire or earnest endeavour after more heat and heavenly-mindedness. A Christian may be without God’s gracious presence and comfortable exercise of grace in present feeling, and yet no forsaker of God ; but rather left of him for a time (his heavenly wisdom for some secret holy ends so disposing), while by grieving, striving, and strong desires, he unfeignedly thirsts after and seriously pursues his former acceptation and forwardness. Here then is comfort : God hath hid his face from thee for a season, and thou art left to the darkness and discomforts of thine own spirit, and thereupon art grievously dejected, thinkest thyself utterly undone ; yet take notice, that in a spiritual desertion properly so called, thou dost not willingly forsake God, but God forsakes thee ; or rather, as divines truly speak, seems to forsake thee ; for he deals with thee in this case as a father

with his child, who sometimes on purpose, still loving him extremely, hides himself from him, as though he were quite gone, to make it discover and manifest its love unto him by longing, seeking, and crying after him; and that for excellent ends, and ever for thy endless comfort:—First, to try whether thou wilt trust in him though he slay thee, as Job did. Every cock-boat can swim in a river, every sculler sail in a calm. In ordinary gusts, any man of meaner skill and lesser patience can steer aright and hold up the head; but when the black tempest comes, a tenth wave flows, one deep calls another, when the tumultuous darkness of the sky, the roaring of the restless element represents terrible things, and heaven and earth are blundered together, as it were, with horrible confusion; when nature yields, spirits faint, hearts fail; then to stand upright and unshaken; then to say with David, “I will not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah:” I say, that is the man who is sound at the heart-root indeed, and steel to the back; and then is the invincible might and incomparable valour of faith made known with a witness, whoever hath God’s sure word for the compass, and the Lord Jesus at the helm. Then doth this glorious grace shine and triumph above nature, sense, reason, worldly wisdom, the arm of flesh, and the whole creation. In such desperate extremities, and sorest trials, it shows itself like the palm tree that yields not to the weightiest burthens; the sheet-anchor that holds when other tacklings break; the oil, that ever over-swims the greatest quantity of water we can pour upon it. And with this improvement of the extraordinary power of faith, God is exceedingly well pleased and highly honoured. Secondly. To enure thee to patience, obedience, and submission to his blessed will in every thing, even extremest sufferings if he so please. Thirdly. To work in thee a deeper detestation of sin and further divorce from the world. Fourthly. To quicken, improve, and exercise some special graces extraordinarily. “Thou didst hide thy face,” saith David, “and I was troubled. Then I cried unto thee, O Lord,” &c. (Psalm xxx, 7, 8.) Then was the spirit of prayer put to it indeed, and so was the grace of patience, waiting, and the like. Fifthly. To cause thee to prize more dearly and to keep more carefully, when it comes again, God’s glorious presence, and the quickening influence of his grace and comfort. We never apprehend the worth and

excellency of any thing so well as by the want of it. The uninterrupted and secure enjoyment of the best things, and even those that please us best, without vicissitude and interchange, is wont to breed such cheapness and satiety, and so dulls the soul's appetite, that it is neither so affected with their precious sweetness, nor thankfully ravished with the present possession of them as it ought. Health is highly valued when sickness hath made us sensible of such a jewel; we relish our food extraordinarily when we have fasted longer than ordinary; rest refreshes us most when our bodies have been tired and over-travelled. Sixthly. To make thee conformable in some measure to Christ's immeasurable spiritual sufferings. Seventhly. To manifest and make illustrious his mightiness and mercy in thy deliverance, and the power of Christ's resurrection." "Wilt thou show wonders to the dead?" saith Heman, "Shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah." (Psalm lxxxviii). Those whom the merciful hand of God hath lifted up out of the depth of a spiritual desertion, will easily acknowledge it as omnipotent a work and wonder, as to pull out of the mouth of hell, and raise the dead men out of the grave. Eighthly. To represent unto thee the difference of thy condition in this life and that which is to come. This is our time of nurture, not of inheritance. Here we walk by faith, not by sight. We live by faith, not by feeling. In this vale of tears we are killed all the day long. But heavenly glimpses of unspeakable and glorious joy, and spiritual ravishments of soul, are seldom and short; their fulness and constant fruition is reserved for the next life. Here we are trained, as it were, in a spiritual warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil; we are exercised unto new obedience by manifold crosses, troubles, and temptations. Satan is sometimes set upon us to afflict us with his own immediate hellish suggestions. Sometimes our own sins grievously affright us with renewed representations of horror. Sometimes our own God frowns upon us himself with his displeased and angry countenance; and in love leaves us awhile to the terrors of a spiritual desertion. He sometimes lays his visiting hand upon our bodies, and casteth us down upon our beds of sickness; sometimes he sends heavy crosses upon our outward states, and breaks the staff of our prosperity. Continually, almost, he suffers many malicious curs to bark at us with slanders, lies, disgraceful imputations, and all the enemies of grace to pursue us bitterly with much malice and disdain. Thus are we trained and entertained in this world; our crowning comes in the world to come. Ninthly, To cause thee to have recourse with

more reverence, thirst, and thankful acknowledgment to the well-head of refreshings. If God once withdraw the light of his countenance and comfortable quickening of his Spirit, we shall find no comfort at all in any creature, no life in the ordinances, no feeling of our spiritual life, and therefore we must needs repair to the ever-springing fountain of all-sufficiency, &c.—Which blessed ends and effects, when the good hand of our God hath wrought, he will as certainly return as ever the sun did after the darkest midnight, and that with abundance of glory, and sweetness proportionable to the former dejection and darkness of our spirits. The lowest ebb of a spiritual desertion brings the highest tide of spiritual exaltation, as we may see before in Mrs. Biettergh and Mr. Peacock.

2. What is the reason that thou art so sad and sore afflicted for the absence of thy beloved, and with want of the wonted gracious and comfortable workings of the Spirit? It is because thou hast formerly grasped the Lord Jesus sweetly and savingly in the arms of thy soul, been sensibly refreshed with the savour of his good ointments, ravished extraordinarily with the beauty of his person, dearness of his blood, riches of his purchase, and glory of his kingdom, and hast heretofore holden him as the very life of the soul, and chiefest and only treasure; ejaculating with David unfeignedly from the heart-root, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee” (Psalm lxxiii, 25). Earth is a hell and heaven no heaven without Jesus Christ. I say, the present grief that thy well-beloved is now gone, argues evidently this former enjoyment of his gracious presence:—and then build upon it as the surest rock. Once Christ’s, and his for ever. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Rom. xi, 29): “whom he loveth once he loveth unto the end” (John xiii, 1): he is no changeling in his love, “I am the Lord,” saith he, “I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Malachi iii, 6). Once elected, ever beloved; once new-born, and born to eternity: if once the sanctifying Spirit hath seized upon thee for Jesus Christ, thou art made sure and locked fast for ever in the arms of his love with everlasting bars of mercy and might from any mortal hurt and adversary power. Thou mayest then cast down the gauntlet of defiance against the devil and the whole world; and take up with Paul that victorious challenge unto all created things—“I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate

me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." He may hide his face from thee for a while ; but thou hast his own sure and inviolable word from his own mouth, that he will return and with "everlasting kindness have mercy on thee." He may frown upon thee, I confess, for a season, and so fright thee with his terrors as though in thy present apprehension thou wert a lost man ; but he never will, he cannot possibly forsake thee finally. "I have sworn once by my holiness that I will not fail David" (Psalm lxxxix, 35). And in the mean time thy former feelings of the motions of the Spirit and grace do give clear evidence and assurance that spiritual life is still resident in thy soul, though run as it were into the root, and though its more lively operations and effects be suspended for a time. The woman that hath once felt the child stir in her womb, is most assured that she is with child, that an immortal soul and natural life is infused into it by the omnipotent hand of God, though at other times she perceive no motion at all. It is so in the present point ; and thy grieving also, groaning, and panting after Christ, is an unanswerable argument that thou art alive spiritually. Lay the weight of the whole world upon a man that is stark dead, and he can neither stir, cry, nor complain.

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## CHAP. XVI.

Two other Helps for the Curing of the former Malady.

CONSIDER that some graces are more substantial in themselves, more profitable to us, and of greater necessity for salvation ; as faith, repentance, love, new obedience active and passive, self-denial, vileness in our own eyes, humble walking with God, &c. Others are not so, or absolutely, necessary, but accompany a saving state as separable accidents ; as joy and peace in believing, sensible comfort in the Holy Ghost, comfortable feelings of God's favour, rejoicing in hope, a lively freedom in prayer, assurance of evidence, &c. And from hence mayest thou take comfort in two respects :— 1. Desertion deprives thee only of these comfortable accessories ; but thou art still possessed of the principal, of the substantials of salvation ; of which not the utmost concurrence of all hellish and earthly rage can possibly rob thee ; and therefore thou art well enough in the mean time, and as safe as safety itself can make thee.

2. Loss of these less principal graces (which by accident is a singular advantage and gain) drives thee nearer unto Jesus Christ, at least by many unutterable groans, every one whereof is a strong cry in the ears of God, and causeth thee better to prize and ply, to exercise and improve more fruitfully those other more necessary graces without which thou canst not be saved. It is a wise and honest passage in Mrs. Juxon's monument: "She continued faithful to the end in the most substantial graces. For howsoever she mourned for the want of that degree of joy which she had felt in former times, yet she continued in repentance, in the practice of holiness and righteousness, in a tender love of God and to his word and children, in holy zeal and fruitfulness even to the last period of her days. And indeed her want of full joy was so sanctified unto her, that it was a furtherance to a better grace, namely, to repentance and self-denial, and base esteem of herself. And I call repentance a better grace than joy, because howsoever joy is a most excellent gift of the Spirit, yet unto us repentance is more profitable. For I make no question but that a mourning Christian may be saved without ravishing joy, and that Christ may wipe away his tears in heaven; but no Christian shall be saved without repentance and self-denial." For instance, the darkness of our spirits in spiritual desertions sets our faith on work extraordinarily. In such a case it hath recourse with more love and longing to all the fountains of life, the person and passion of Christ, all the promises, God's free grace, his sweet name, and surveys them more seriously, searches and sounds them to the bottom, that by some means at least it may subsist and hold up the head in such an evil time, and amongst so many terrors and boisterous tempests. It is now put to the improvement of the very utmost of all its heavenly vigour and valour; and enforced to put forth its highest and most heroical act, even to cleave fast to the sure word of God against all sense and feeling; against all terrors, tricks of Satan, and temptations to the contrary. And by this extraordinary exercise and wrestling, it is notably strengthened and steeled for the time to come. For as sloth, idleness, and want of exercise doth much emasculate and make our bodies more inactive and unable, but hardship, agitation, and employment, doth much quicken and fortify them; so it is in the present point, without oppositions and assault, faith languisheth and lies hid; but when storms and spiritual troubles are abroad, it stirs up itself, gathers its strength and forces together, casts about for subsidiary assistance by prayer, ministerial counsel, meditation upon special promises for the purpose, ex-

perimental recounting former deliverances, mercies, and favours upon ourselves and others, and so becomes far more excellent and victorious for future encounters. It furthers also repentance, in respect of,—First, Sight of sins. For through the glass of spiritual affliction we see more of them, and see them to be more monstrously vile. The clouds of inward trouble especially, unite as it were, and collect the sight of our souls, and so represent our sins more to the life and in their true colours; whereas the glistening of prosperity is wont to disperse and dazzle it. Secondly, Of sense. We are then more apprehensive of divine wrath and weight of sin, when we are terrified but with a taste of those immeasurable seas of bitterness and terror which it infinitely merits at the hands of God. Thirdly, Of hatred and opposition. We then grow into a more hearty loathing of that sweet meat which we are too apt to tumble into our mouth and hide under our tongue, when we feel it accompanied with such sour sauce, and turned into gall and gravel within us. We shall afterwards be far more watchful, and afraid to give entertainment or warmth in our bosoms to those vipers which have so bitten and stung us. It makes self-denial more resolute and thorough; for the dearest and most desirable things of this life, compared with Christ, were never viler dung in our esteem than at such a time. We then find that most true, that though all the stars shine never so bright, yet it is still night because the sun is gone. But the alone presence of that prince of light creates a comfortable and glorious day, though never a star appear. So let us enjoy the Lord Jesus, and no matter though all the creatures in the world be turned into bears or devils about us: but if he withdraw himself, and the light of his countenance set out of our sight, the confluence of all the comforts the whole creation can afford will do us no good at all. It quickeneth notably our new obedience; in respect of,—First, Holiness towards God, and reverent heavenly behaviour about the first table. A general taste and trial whereof we may take, by comparing mariners in a storm with those arrived in a haven; prisons with theatres; burials with banquets; beds of sickness and expectation of death with strength of youth and prosperous health; and, which is punctual for my purpose, fits of temptation with times of spiritual welfare. For as in the one state we may observe too much presumption and putting far from us the evil day, forgetfulness of God, security and sloth; so in the other, trouble, danger, and distress, much alter the case. We shall then see them bitterly bewailing their former sins, trembling in the dust, seeking early God's face

and favour, falling to prayer, vowing better obedience, and promising upon deliverance much holiness and a happy change. What mighty groans of spirit proceed from the deserted in such a case, which are the strongest prayers, though in that agony they falsely complain that they cannot pray! How greedy are they of godly conference, counsel, and comfort out of the word, days of humiliation, of the most searching sermons, godliest company, presence and prayers of the precisest ministers! How fearful are they to hear any worldly talk upon the Lord's day! How sensible of the least sin, any dishonour of God, and all appearance of evil! In a word, how busy are they about that one necessary thing! Secondly, Of compassionateness towards others. Self-sufferings soften men's hearts towards their brethren: personal miseries make them pitiful and painful to afford all possible help in times of distress. Experience of our own weaknesses, wants, danger to sink under the waves of God's wrath, and disability to subsist by ourselves, begets a sweet mildness and gentle behaviour towards our neighbours, whose assistance, visitation, and prayers we now see we stand in need of in extremities and evil times. Prosperity is apt of itself to beget scornfulness, insolency, self-confidence, and contempt of others; but God's hand upon us, especially in afflictions of soul, teacheth us another lesson; to wit, how frail, weak, and unworthy we are. Thirdly, Of self-knowledge. In times of peace and calmness, looking through the false spectacles of self-love and conceitedness, we are ready to over-estimate and outprize our gifts, to mistake shadows for substances, smallest mites of virtue for richest talents, the infant beginnings of grace for tallness in Christ. But remove these deceiving glasses, and let the touchstone of some sorer trial represent ourselves unto ourselves, and we shall more clearly see our spiritual abilities in their true nature and proportion. Then all unsound semblances of self-conceited sufficiencies and former flourishes of unhumble assurance, which, like gilded papers or posts, showing gloriously in the sunshine, and seeming pure gold in outward appearance, will vanish quite away and come to nothing in the fire of spiritual affliction. Then the weakness of our too much vaunted of Christian valour will be discovered unto us, and acknowledged by us, when we are put to wrestle with the wrath of God, and left to the horror of some hideous temptation.

4. Hear Mr. Hooker, a man of great learning and very sound in this point: I vary some words, but keep the sense entire. "Happier a great deal is that man's case whose soul by inward desolation is humbled, than he whose heart

is through abundance of spiritual delight, lifted up and exalted above measure. Better is it sometimes to go down into the pit with him, who, beholding darkness and bewailing the loss of inward joy and consolation, crieth from the bottom of the lowest hell, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" than continually to walk arm in arm with angels; to sit, as it were, in Abraham's bosom; and to have no thought or cogitation, but of peace and blessing himself in the singularity of assurance above other men; to say, I desire no other bliss, but only duration of my present comfortable feelings and fruition of God, I want nothing but even thrusting into heaven, and the like. For in the height of spiritual ravishments thou art in great hazard of being exalted above measure, and so may be justly exposed to a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet thee, which is a very heavy case. But now on the other side, the lowest degree of humiliation under God's mighty hand is the nearest step to rising and extraordinary exultation of spirit. The extremest darkness of spiritual desertion is wont to go immediately before the glorious sun-rise of heavenly light, and unutterable light-someness in the soul. David securely pleasing and applauding himself in his present stability and strong conceit of the continuance of his peace, brake out thus: "I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong" (Psalm xxxvi, 7). But he was quickly thrown down from the top of his supposed immoveable hill; taken off from the height of his confidence, and lay trembling in the dust. "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." But now that sweetest rapture of incredible joy (for so he spake, "The joy which I feel in my conscience is incredible") did arise in Mr Peacock's heart when he was newly come as it were out of the mouth of hell. Mrs. Brettergh's wonderful rejoicing followed immediately upon her return out of a "roaring wilderness," as she called it. What large effusions of the Spirit and overflowing rivers of heavenly peace were plentifully showered down upon Robert Glover's troubled spirit, after the heaviest night, in all likelihood, that ever he had in this world, by reason of a grievous desertion!

## CHAP. XVII.

Two more helps for the Cure of the former Malady.

5. **NAY**, hear the Spirit of all truth and comfort himself immediately. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Whence we may draw a double comfort in time of desertion:—First. Because in thy present apprehension thou findest and feelest thyself in darkness, and to have no light; thou art ready thereupon to conceive and conclude unnecessarily against thy own soul, that God's favour, Jesus Christ, grace, salvation, and all are gone for ever. And this is the most cutting sting and sorest pang which grievously afflicts and rends the heart in pieces with restless anguish in such cases. Out of what depth of horror do you think did these heavy groans, and almost, if not altogether for the time, despairing speeches spring in those blessed saints mentioned before? "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?" While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. I am amazed, confounded, and almost mad with fear, lest my soul should be swallowed up with the horrors of eternal death. "I am afraid lest the Lord hath utterly withdrawn his wonted favour from me! Woe, woe, &c. A weak, a woful, a wretched, a forsaken woman, I have no more sense of grace than these curtains. Oh! how woful and miserable is my estate, that must thus converse with hell-hounds! It is against the course of God's proceedings to save me," &c. But now herein the deserted in the sense I have said are much deceived, and extremely wrong; their own souls in such extremity not considering that their walking in darkness and having no light may most certainly consist with a saving estate and a being in God's favour, though for the present not perceived, which appears plainly by the quoted place, wherein he that walketh in darkness and hath no light is such a one as feareth the Lord and obeyeth the voice of his servant. Now the fear of God and obedience to the ministry are evident marks of a gracious man. Hence it is that when the servants of God are something come again unto themselves, they see and censure their own unadvisedness in that respect, disavow and disclaim all terms tending that way, which they

let hastily fall from them in the heat of temptation. "And I said," saith David, "this is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." "Truly," said Mr. Peacock, "my heart and soul have been far led and deeply troubled with temptations and stings of conscience; but I thank God they are eased in good measure. Wherefore I desire that I be not branded with the note of a forlorn reprobate. Such questions, oppositions, and all tending thereto I renounce." Here then is a great deal of comfort in the greatest darkness of a spiritual desertion: for we may assure ourselves that God by his blessed Spirit hath a secret influence and saving work upon the soul of his child, when there is no light or feeling of his favour at all. The sun, we know, though he leaves his light upon the face of the earth, yet notwithstanding descends by a real effectual influence into the bosom and darkest bowels thereof; and there exerciseth a most excellent work in begetting metals, gold, silver, and other precious things. It is proportionably so in the present point: A poor soul may lie grovelling in the dust, "afflicted, tossed with tempest," and in present apprehension have no comfort, and yet blessedly partake still of the sweet influence of God's everlasting love, of a secret saving work of grace and almighty support of the sanctifying Spirit. Let us look upon the Lord Jesus himself. His holy soul, though he was Lord of heaven and earth, upon the cross, was even as a scorched heath-ground, without so much as any drop of the dew of comfort either from heaven or earth; and yet at the same time he was gloriously sustained by an omnipotent influence. And God was never nearer unto him than then; neither he ever so obedient unto God. And I make no doubt, but that the judicious eye of the well-experienced physician may many times easily observe it in those troubled, tempted, and deserted souls which they deal and converse with for recovery and cure. This secret and saving influence I speak of might be evidently discerned in Mr. Peacock, even at the worst. Some reverend ministers standing by his bed of sorrow asked him if they should pray for him. Mark well his answer. "Take not the name of God in vain," said he, "by praying for a reprobate;" which words, well weighed, seem to imply and represent clearly to a spiritual discerning judgment some good measure even of the highest degree of divine love, preferring the glory of God before the welfare of his own soul, rather willing to have the means of his salvation neglected than the Lord dishonoured. One asking him if he felt any thing of Christian affection towards such a one, meaning a godly man. Yes, saith he. Why? For

his goodness. Another coming to him upon the Lord's day, willed him to put his hand to a note of certain debts. "This is not a day for that," said he : and at the same time he would hardly suffer any to stay with him from the sermon. Being told of suffering plaisters out of God's word to rest upon his wounded soul, he brake out thus : "Oh ! if I had. Oh ! if it would please God, I had rather than any thing in this, or other three thousand worlds." By these we may see, and other passages to the same purpose, that our blessed God had a secret working and saving influence upon his soul, even in the depth and hideous darkness of his most grievous desertion. Here is love, first, unto God in a high degree ; secondly, dear affection unto his children, and that for his image shining in them ; thirdly, love unto his sabbaths and salvation of others ; fourthly, vehement desires after grace and God's favour. All which were undeniable demonstrations of a state of grace to every understanding eye, nay, unquestionable arguments of spiritual life and designation to eternal bliss. Whereupon my resolution was then, and protestation upon good ground, that if all the powerful eloquence which rested within the reverend bosom of mine own dear mother the famous university of Oxford, managed by the seraphical tongue of the highest and most glorious angel in heaven, had been industriously set on work for that purpose ; except I had heard my blessed Redeemer say, I will rend a member from my body and throw it away ; the Holy Spirit say, I will pull my seal from that soul which I have savingly sanctified ; my gracious and merciful Father say, I will this once fail and forsake one of mine ;—I could never have been possibly persuaded that that soul of his, so richly laden with heavenly treasure and gifts of God never to be repented of, so sincerely exercised in the ways of God and opposition to the corruption of the times, &c., should possibly perish ! Secondly. Suppose thou shouldst "walk in darkness and have no light" in the sense of the prophet, for the residue and remainder of thy few and evil days in this vale of tears ; nay, and die so, before comfort comes ; yet be not comforted. For "fearing God" and being upright-hearted, thy soul shall most certainly be preserved in spiritual and eternal safety "by staying upon thy God," though thou be without any sense of joy and peace in believing. This life, though never so long, is but a moment to the life to come ; but the "kindness is everlasting" with which "he will have mercy on thee." Thy sufferings are but short, whatsoever they be ; but thou hast eternity of joys in the world above, purchased and prepared for thee by the heart's blood

of that blessed Saviour of thine upon whom thy soul relies. It is the devil's policy, say divines, to procure for his slaves all the favours, honours, and advancements, all the prosperities and pleasures he can possibly, lest if he should not follow and fulfil their humours this way, they might think upon seeking after and serving a new master. Not caring to vex or molest them in this world, because he knows full well he shall have time enough hereafter to torment them in hell. And will not thou contrarily be content, if God so please, to pass through this vale of tears even with Heiman's horror (Ps. lxxxviii, 15), since heaven is so near at hand, and thou hast a little before thee an everlasting time to row in the bottomless and boundless ocean of all glory and bliss, in an endless variety of new and fresh delights, infinitely excellent and sweet above the largest created conceit ?

6. Let us suppose a Christian in these three states (and it is no very strange thing to those who observe or feel God's secret and unsearchable dealings with his children):— First, In a fair and comfortable calm and sunshine, after the tempestuous troubles and travail in the pangs of the new birth, when the light of God's countenance, the first refreshing warmth of his sanctifying Spirit, the fresh sweetness and vital stirrings of grace, the ravishing consciousness of his happy conversion, do fill his soul "as with marrow and fatness," and feed it with a kindly and more lively disposition to all good and godly duties. Secondly, In a spiritual desertion, when the sense of God's favour, love, and wonted presence, the comfortable use and exercise of the ordinances, graces, and spiritual affairs, languish and leave him for a time. Thirdly, In the state of recovery and restitution from such fearful damp and deprivation of Divine comfort, unto former joyful feelings and re-enjoyment of his beloved; so that his revived soul may sweetly sing, "My beloved is mine and I am his." Now, I doubt not, but that the middle of these three estates, being accompanied with hearty grief and groans for Christ's absence, restless pantings and longings after a new resurrection, as it were, of the sensible and fruitful operations of grace, renewed desires and endeavours for regainment of accustomed surer hold by the hand of faith, patient and prayerful waiting for the return of God's pleased face, &c., is as pleasing and dear, if not more so, to our merciful Father, as either of the other two. Do you not think, that the fathers of our flesh are as lovingly affected and meltingly moved to hear the obedient child sigh and sob, cry out and complain, because they look not kindly upon him; but for trial of his affection have hid for a time the much-desired

beams of their fatherly favour, under some affected angry frowns, as when things are carried more currently and comfortably betwixt them without any great distaste and discontentment, or occasion to discover the mutual impatience of their loves one unto another? And shall not the Father of our spirits, who loves us with the same love with which he loves the Lord Jesus himself; surpass as far in affectionate compassion towards us in the like case as an Almighty God doth a mortal man? He cannot choose, because the word is already gone out of his mouth: "Like as a father pitieth his child, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Psalm ciii, 13). I am persuaded God's bowels of compassionate tender-heartedness and love did yearn within him towards Job with more dearness and delight at that cry, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job xiii, 15), than at any time else, even in the spring of his spiritual prosperity, or fullest tide of most heavenly feelings. Here then is comfort, more than thy heart can hold, if thou wilt be counselled by the prophets, that thou mayest prosper. For when thou thinkest that all is gone, that thou art a lost man, and utterly forsaken, even in the depth of thy spiritual darkness (thou being so spiritually disposed as I have said, and which thou canst not deny), I say even then (and thou oughtest so to apprehend and believe) the love of God is, as it were, doubled towards thee, much more endeared by reason of thy distress, and cannot hold, but breaks out many times into extraordinary pangs and expressions thereof, as we may see Isa. liv, 11, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted," &c.; and into profession of resolution and waiting to do us good, which he will superabundantly perform in the best time. "Behold; I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires." (ibid.) "And therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted that he may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isa. xxx, 18). Withdrawing the effects and exercise of our love from him whom we love dearly, makes it return with redoubled fervour into our own bosoms, and there grow into a more vehement flame, which never rests until it break out again with dearer pangs upon the beloved party. Even as when the sun suffers an eclipse, and its beams are driven back and reflected from the face of the moon interposed directly between it and our sight, so that they shine not upon us, then is the heat\* and light thereof multiplied and much intended toward the

\* Or at least virtual power of heating.

fountain, which afterwards is shed down upon us again more amiably and acceptably when the darkness is done. And let us further take notice, that Christ, our eldest brother, blessed for ever, deals with us in such cases as Joseph (a type of him in many respects) dealt with his brethren. He frowned upon them, handled them roughly, and frightened them extremely, only to humble them thoroughly; but in the mean time and midst of his menacing carriage, his heart was so full of natural affection, that he was enforced by the excess thereof to turn aside and weep, and so return to them again. "And he turned himself about from them and wept, and returned to them again" (Gen. xlii, 24). So the Son of God, as well as God the Father through him, though sometimes "in a little wrath he hide his face from us;" yet as he will certainly after "a small moment gather us with great mercies;" so in the mean time "he is afflicted," and most tenderly affected towards us "in all our afflictions." See Isa. lxiii, 9.

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## CHAP. XVIII.

The last help for the Curing of the former Malady.

7. THINK it not strange that thou art fallen into this kind of spiritual affliction, as though some strange thing, or that which doth not or may not befall the dearest servants of God, had happened unto thee; for herein thou becomest conformable to as holy men as ever the world had; Job, David, Heman, Luther, &c.; nay, to the Son of God himself, from whose example and precedence let the Christian, even in the darkest horror of a spiritual desertion, when he is afraid lest God hath forsaken him, fetch abundance of comfort and support out of such considerations as these:—

(1.) Christ himself was in the same case. Besides a numberless variety of most barbarous cruelties inflicted upon his blessed body by the merciless and implacable malice of the Jews, and by consequent sympathy upon his glorious soul; he suffered also in soul immediately, intolerable, and (save by himself) unconquerable torments and pain. He grasped with the fiercest wrath of his Father for our sins, and sweat blood under the sense of his angry countenance. Nay, this cross upon his soul, infinitely more weighty than that which he carried upon his shoulders towards Calvary, did not only cause streams of great bloody drops to fall down to the ground; but also pressed from him that heavy groan, Mat. xxvi, 38, "My soul is exceed-

ing sorrowful, even unto death ;” and that last rueful bitter cry, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” chap xxvii, 46. If Christ Jesus himself then, blessed for ever, the “ Son of the Father’s love,” the Prince of Glory ; nay, the glory of heaven and earth, the brightness of everlasting light, &c. in whom he profeseth himself to be well-pleased, and for whose sake only he loves all the sons of men which shall be saved, was thus plunged into a matchless depth of unknown sorrows and most grievous desertion, let no Christian cry out in the like spiritual desolation (but ever immeasurably short of his) and in his fear of being forsaken, that his case is singular, desperate, irrecoverable. For the only, dear, innocent Son of God was far worse in this respect, and in greater extremity than he is, can, or ever shall be.

(2.) Amongst other ends for which the Lord Jesus drank so deep, and the very dregs of that bitter cup of his dearest Father’s heaviest indignation, this was one : that by a particular and personal passing through that infinite sea, those extremest dreadful horrors of Divine wrath for our sins, which we all most justly deserved, and would have caused any mere creature to have sunk down under it into the bottom of hell, and by an experimental fear and feeling of that bitter and bloody agony, which melted, as it were, his blessed soul into that mournful cry, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” — the comfortable influence of the Deity being for the time in some sort restrained and retired from the human nature, that it might be capable and sensible of that anger and anguish, which would have holden both men and angels, and all-created natures, under everlasting calamity and woe ;—I say, that by his own sense and experience of such painful passages, he might learn and know, with a more fellow-feeling and pitiful heart to commiserate his poor afflicted ones in their spiritual desertions, and with a softer and more compassionate hand to bind up their bleeding souls with his sweetest balm of tender-heartedness and love, when in such horrible depths they shall thirst and long, and gasp for drops of mercy and his Father’s pleased face : “ For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted ” (Heb. ii, 18). A woman who hath herself with extraordinary torture endured the exquisite pains of child-birth, is wont to be a great deal more tenderly and mercifully affected to another in like case, than she that never tried what it is to be terrified with the suddenness, unavoidableness, and terrible pangs of a woman’s travail ; and is more skilful, ready, and forward to relieve in such

distress. And so also all others, who have been most afflicted either with outward troubles or inward terrors, or both, are ever most fit and feeling to speak unto the heart, to put to their helping hand, and make much of comfortless and miserable men, troubled and tempted as they have been. And such was the case of our blessed Saviour in his sufferings for our sakes. He was exercised all his life long with variety and extremity of cruelties, indignities, and all manner of vexations beyond measure, grievous, bitter, and intolerable. He drank full deep of the world's disgrace; the devil's malice; the rage of great ones; the contempt and contumelies of the vilest; the scornful insultings of his enemies; sorest sufferings from all things in heaven, earth, and hell; of those pinching passions, hunger, thirst, weariness; of bodily tortures, hideous temptations, agonies of spirit, even of the full cup of his Father's fiery wrath, and horrors of soul for our sins to the very last drop, which went as far beyond his other outward extremities, as the soul goes beyond the body, or God's utmost anger the malice of men; whereby he is now blessedly fitted and enabled excellently "to succour them that are tempted." Consciousness of his own case in the "days of his flesh" is a keen incentive to his holy and heavenly soul, more sensibly and soon to take pity upon and ease the several necessities, troubles, sorrows, and soul-afflictions of all his children.

(3.) As this ever-blessed Redeemer of ours was in himself more than infinitely free, and more than far enough from all sins; so by consequence from any inherent cause of the least cross, or any shadow in the world of his dearest Father's displeased countenance. For originally he was of a most pure, harmless, and holy nature all his life long; kind, sweet, and gracious to every creature; offending none, doing good unto all; in his death incomparably patient, "brought as an innocent lamb" to that bloody slaughter; "not opening his mouth" for all those base and barbarous provocations of the cruel and merciless miscreants about him; swimming in blood, burning in zeal, wrestling in prayer even for the salvation of his enemies. So that his guiltless and unspotted soul had no need at all of any passion or expiation. All his sorrows and sufferings were voluntarily undergone only for our sakes and sins. Had not the precious heart's blood of the only, dear, natural, eternal Son of God, been poured out as water upon the ground, whereat the whole creation was astonished, the earth trembled and shook, her rocks clave asunder, her graves opened, the heavens withdrew their light, as not daring to behold this sad and fearful spectacle, never had

the soul of any son or daughter of Adam been saved. It was not the glory and treasures of the whole earth, not any streaming sacrifices of purest gold, not the life of men and angels; no, not the power and prostration of all the creatures in heaven and earth, or of ten thousand worlds besides, could have prevailed, satisfied, and served the turn in this case. Either the "heir of all things" must die, or we had all been damned. Is the heart then of any mourner in Zion heavy and ready to break for sorrow because he hath lost the light of God's face, feeling of his love, and consolations of grace; so that the darkness of his spirit thereupon frights him with repossession of his pardoned sins, temptations to despair, and fears lest he be forsaken? O then let him hie and have speedy recourse unto this heavenly cordial, when our Lord and our love felt the curse of our sins and his Father's hottest wrath coming upon him in the garden, without any outward violence at all, only out of the pain of his own thoughts, bled, through the flesh and skin, not some faint dew, but even solid drops of blood; and afterwards in the bitterness of his soul cried out upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And none of all this for himself; for no stain at all did cleave to his sacred soul; but all this (the least of which we can no more express than we could undergo) for thy sake and salvation alone, who lovest our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. And therefore ground upon it as upon the surest rock, even in the height of thy heavy-heartedness and depth of spiritual desertion, that those depths of sorrow, whereof our thoughts can find no bottom, through which he waded in his bloody sweat, cry upon the cross, and painful sufferings in soul, did most certainly free thee everlastingly from the guilt, venom, and endless vengeance of all terrors of conscience, agonies of spirit, temptations to despair, and damnations of hell. The righteous Judge of all the world will never expect or exact at the hands of any of his creatures double payment, a double punishment. Our dearest Saviour hath satisfied to the utmost with his own blood the rigour and extremity of his Father's justice in thy behalf; and therefore it is utterly impossible that thou shouldst ever finally perish. Inward afflictions and troubles of mind may for a time press thee so sore, that thou mayest be ready to sink for chastisement, trial, prevention of sin, perfecting the pangs of the new birth, example to others, &c. But in despite of the united rage and policy of all infernal powers, thou shalt in due time be raised again by that victorious and triumphant hand which "bruised the serpent's head" and burst the heart of hell:

even "out of a horrible pit be set upon a rock" far above the reach of all hellish hurt or sting of horror. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isa. liv, 8).

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## CHAP. XIX.

The Fifth Malady of an Afflicted Conscience. The First way of curing it, which is Speculative, and the first part of that way, which is by Consideration.

5. **THERE** is another terrible fiery dart, dipped full deep in the very rankest poison of the infernal pit, which though it be not much talked of abroad, nor taken notice of by the world, yet is secretly suggested and managed with extremest malice and cruelty in the silent bosoms of God's blessed ones. The most holy hearts are many times most haunted with this foulest fiend. Strangers to the ways of God be not much troubled in this kind, nor ordinarily vexed with such horrors. Satan, as I said before, makes as much of his in this world as he can possibly, knowing that he hath time enough, even eternity to torment them in the world to come; and therefore he is not wont to wield this terrifying weapon against them, save only at some dead lift, or upon some special advantage, as under some extraordinary misery, or in excess of melancholy, to drive them thereby to distraction or despair. Or it may be, God may suffer him to afflict thus hideously some grievous sinner whom he is about to bring in; to prepare him thereby (though the devil himself meaneth not so) for the pangs of the new birth, deeper humiliations, and more vehement desires to get under the wings of Christ from that hellish kite. Or he may sometimes mingle these horrible stings with the terrors of spiritual travail, upon purpose to hinder conversion by a diversion into bye-ways, or frightening back again to folly and former courses. But sure I am, the ordinary object and special aim of Satan's malice in this point are only those who have happily escaped out of his clutches already, and are fully and for ever freed from his damning fury and all deadly hurt. And I know not whether there be any of these which doth not less or more, at one time or other, suffer under this horror. And yet every one of them thinks himself singular in this suffering; and that it is not usual for God's children to have such prodigiously

foul and fearful thoughts put into their heads, which they dare not mention for their abhorred monstrousness, neither remember without trembling. Now by this dreadful engine of the devil, which I thus talk of before I tell you what it is (and no marvel, for what heart would not willingly retire, or can choose but tremble in treating upon such a theme?)—I mean hideous injections, horrible thoughts, blasphemous suggestions, monstrous conceits of the most holy, pure, and ever-glorious God, his word, divine truths, the Lord Jesus blessed for ever; or some way or other about spiritual and heavenly things, framed immediately by Satan himself, and with furious violence thrown into our minds infinitely against our wills, at the grisliness whereof not only religion but also reason, nay even corrupted nature and common sense stand astonished, and shrink back at the horror, and abhor them extremely.—Some of God's dearest children and those that love him best (would you think it? yet it is too true) are sometimes so pestered with their irksome intrusions, that whatsoever they speak, do, hear, read, or think upon, is wrested, perverted, and helliciously poisoned with this temptation of blasphemy. And they are ordinarily pressed upon them with most importunity and impetuosity, when they are best busied and exercised in the holiest duties, as in prayer, hearing, or reading the word, singing of psalms, days of humiliation, &c.

In the first place, for a comfortable support in such a case, peruse, ponder well upon, and apply such considerations and counsels as these:—

(1.) In this terrible temptation also thou becomest but conformable to thy Lord and Master who bought thee with his dearest blood, and to many of his blessed saints. Was there ever suggestion in conceit, or word, or any possibility of being like unto this in execrableness and horror, that the King of saints, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, should fall down and worship the prince of hell and vilest of creatures? (Rev. xv, 3; Colos. ii, 9.) And yet this most horrible blasphemy was injected into the most holy imagination of Jesus Christ, with which it was infinitely more impossible to be any ways tainted or stained than the fairest sun-beam with the foulest dirt. But he endured it, and conquered, and that for our sakes only and safety, even for such excellent ends as these:—First, That when we are set upon by Satan in the same kind, and so hideously assaulted, that upon the first sense we are ready to sink under the sudden fright, and to think that none in the world are so but we; yet in cool blood we may comfortably recover ourselves, and presently conceive that our

case is not singular and incompatible with a saving state : for even the Son of God himself surpassed us in the same suffering. Secondly, That he might take the venom sting and guilt from this hateful and horrible temptation for all his to the world's end. Thirdly, that having himself tasted the devil's malice herein, he might out of his own feeling and experience more tenderly take to heart our troubles and terrors that way ; more mightily fortify and free our spirits against the invasion and surprise of all such prodigious injections and flashes of hell.

2. It is the concurrent judgment of learned and holy divines, that these monstrously blasphemous thoughts and satanical suggestions, resisted and not consented unto, are not *our sins*, but *our crosses*. Or suppose there would be any tainture on our parts, yet condemning them in our judgments and abhorring them with our hearts, we may be most assured that the blood of Jesus Christ is infinitely more mighty and sovereign to take away the venom and vileness of them, than the devil malicious and subtle to inject. I will imagine that some bloody popish powder traitor had pressed upon thee at that time, and suggested thus—“ We are plotting, and purpose to blow up the parliament with gunpowder ; to destroy at one blow the king, queen, prince, nobility, &c., and afterward to cut the throats of all the protestants in the kingdom ; to root the gospel out of it for ever, &c. ; and then to lay the fault upon the puritans.” These and the like were injections of much horror and monstrous nature. For thus men learned both in the mystery of Christ and depths of state spoke of that plot at that time :—“ Remember but the powder-treason, the uttermost part of all villany ; beyond which it is *terra incognita*, no man can devise what should be between hell and it\*.” “ Consider but this day, the birthday, as I may term it, of our country, in which both prince and people came, as it were, anew into the world, delivered from the fearful powder vault, the very belly of hell and confusion, as Jonah sometime did from the belly of the whale†.” “ Behold that which so many millions of eyes, since those windows were first opened in the head of man to behold the light of heaven ; I say, so many millions of eyes in their several generations now sunk down into their holes, and consumed within their tabernacles, never saw ; never those glorious and constant lights of the firmament, those clear and crystalline eyes of nature, which walk through the whole world and give no rest to their temples ; the sun that wandereth

\* Dr. White, in his Sermon at Paul's Cross.

† Dr. Tynley, in his Sermon at Paul's Cross.

by day, and the moon that walketh by night, they never saw the like, &c.\*” “It was of such prodigious monstrousness, that before now, the tongue of man never delivered, the ear of man never heard, the heart of man never conceived, nor the malice of hellish or earthly devil ever practised †.” “It is beyond all example, whether in fact or fiction, even of the tragic poets, who did beat their wits to represent the most fearful and horrible murders ‡.” “The plot whereof Livy speaks, of dispatching the whole senate of Rome in an hour; the device at Carthage to cut off a whole faction by one enterprize; the conspiring of Brutus and Cassius to kill Cæsar in the senate: the project of destroying in one conclave the greatest part of the cardinals; the Sicilian even-song, and the Parisian matins; nay, the wish of Nero, that Rome had but one head which he might cut off at one blow, came far short of this invention, which spared neither age, sex, nor degree §.” Well then, if thou shouldst have approved and consented unto the suggestion of this most execrable and unheard-of villany, for which hell hath not a fit name, nor the world a sufficient punishment, thou hadst made thyself the most prodigious beast that ever breathed, an abhorred monster of mankind, and justly merited to have passed presently from most exquisite tortures here, to endless torments in another world. But now, if all the while the motion was making thy heart had risen against it with indignation and loathing, thou protestedst to the party thy abominating any thought that way from the heart root to the pit of hell; and immediately running to the king shouldst have discovered and disclaimed it as a most detestable and hellish plot; I say then, what man could have justly blamed thee, or wherein could thy conscience any way accuse thee? It is so in the present point. As that other incarnate devil in his kind, so the devil himself throws into thine imagination most hideous thoughts and horrible blasphemies, even against the dreadful Majesty of heaven, the thrice-blessed and ever-glorious Trinity, the holy humanity of the Lord Jesus, &c. To which if thou shouldst understandingly assent and approve indeed, thou mightest expect most worthily to become ten times fouler than the ugliest fiend in hell. But since thou knowest in thine own conscience, that thy heart trembles with horror and amazedness, when they are offered, nay violently thrust into thy mind, that thou resisted and re-

\* Dr. King, in his Sermon at Whitehall.

† Sir Edward Philips, in the proceedings against the late Traitors.

‡ Sir Edward Coke, *ibid.*

§ The Earl of Northampton, *ibid.*

jected them with all the power and prayer thou canst possibly, canst not choose but, out of a pang of infinite detestation and heart-rising, turn thus, or in the like manner, upon the tempter: "Most malicious enemy to the glory of my God and good of my soul, thou troublest thyself and me in vain. I do infinitely acknowledge my blessed Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, to be one incomprehensible, glorious, wise, gracious God: heaven to be wholly filled, embroidered, impaled, with nothing but holiness and happiness: all the creatures to be good, as they issued out of the hands of God, and remembrancers to us of his power, wisdom, and goodness: God's blessed book to be all most holy, most true, a rich treasury of heavenly wisdom and sweetest knowledge, &c. And thy cursed self to be the only author and broacher of all sin, hurt, and uncomeliness; and to thee and thine alone they belong. Mingle not, then, thy malice with my lowliest, most dear, and reverend thoughts of my Father, my Saviour, my Comforter," &c\*. And thou art also wont presently to press in private into God's glorious presence, and prostrate thyself before his righteous throne, there to discover this hellish malice, to complain how villainously the devil deals with thee, to protest thine innocency, and infinite hatred of these horrible blasphemies, to cry heartily for pardon, patience, and power against them. And therefore it being thus with thee, thou mayest upon good ground be more than infinitely assured, that they are not imputed unto thee at all, but wholly set upon Satan's score. Hence it is, and from this ground, that I have many times told some, thus tempted, that when they have passed a duty, pressed upon violently, and pestered with the furious intrusion of such unutterably foul and fearful injections, they have in all likelihood spent that day with far less sin in their thoughts, and more freedom from guilt and provocation of divine anger, than if they had been free; because they being so earnestly and vehemently deprecated, withstood with such aversion and loathing, protested against unfeignedly, and that upon such terms that they would rather be torn in pieces with wild horses, die ten thousand deaths, do or suffer any thing, than yield the least assent or approbation thereunto; they are then, I say, not their transgressions, but afflictions; not their iniquities, but miseries; not their sins, but crosses. Nay, and further for their comfort, if they should be haunted by them until their ending hour (which God forbid, and beat back such accursed and hateful spite from every humble soul!) yet

\* These very words were forced, by fury of temptation, from one tempted in this kind.

cleaving close unto the Lord Jesus, hating all sin, and having respect to all God's commandments, they are not able at all, neither can any whit hinder, hurt, or any way prejudice their spiritual state and everlasting salvation.

3. Every servant of Christ hath his share in some affliction or other, and is ever made in some good measure conformable to him in his sufferings. Those who have the reins laid and left upon their necks without curb or correction, are bastards and not sons. They may, as the Holy Ghost tells us, prosper in this world, and pass peaceably out of it, and have no bands in their death like other men; "they may live, and become old, and be mighty in power: their seed may be established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes: their houses may be safe from fear, neither may the rod of God be upon them; their bull may gender and fail not; their cow may calve, and not cast her calf; they may send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance: they may take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ: they may spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave" (Job xxi, 7—13); at last die even like a lamb. But when all is done, they are utterly undone and everlastingly, by reason of the horror and anguish that shall come upon their souls; the affliction, the wormwood, and the gall: for horrible is the end of the unrighteous generation. they are immediately thrown down from the top of their imaginary felicity, and untroubled bed of seeming peace, to the depth of extremest misery and bottom of the burning lake. But it is not so with the servants of God. "He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. xii, 6). "He hath only one Son without sin, none without suffering," saith an ancient father. But here take notice, that in this dispensation of fatherly corrections amongst his children, he ever, out of his unsearchable merciful wisdom, singles out and makes choice of those which are most suitable, and the fittest for their spiritual good. And therefore, both for the kind and particular, let us ever humbly and thankfully submit and wholly refer ourselves to the sweet and wise disposing of our most loving and dearest Father, who ever knows best what is best for us in such cases, both in regard of his service and our sufferings, his glory and our gain; what we are able to bear, how he hath furnished us beforehand with spiritual strength to go through temptations and troubles, what spiritual physic is most quick and operative, and best suited to the prevention, cure, and recovery of our soul-sicknesses, distempers, and declinations; how wisely to proportion and mercifully moderate in respect of

measure, time, and working ; and when his hand is heavy upon us in one kind, tenderly to take care that we be not oppressed with other extremities also ; as appears by that sweet observation of Mr. Fox, in the story of the two Glovers. " God, in his holy providence, seeing his old and trusty servant so many years with so extreme and many torments, broken and dried up, would in no wise heap too many sorrows upon one poor silly wretch, neither would commit him to the flames of fire, who had been already baked and scorched with the sharp fires of inward affliction, and had sustained so many burning darts and conflicts of Satan so many years. God, therefore, of his divine providence, thinking it too much that one man should be so much overcharged with so many plagues and torments, did graciously provide, that Robert his brother, being both stronger of body, and also better furnished with helps of learning to answer the adversaries, should sustain the conflict." It may be our only wise God purposeth to exercise us extraordinarily with spiritual conflicts and troubles of conscience, and therefore doth mercifully give us more prosperity and comfort in our outward state ; or, perhaps, to afflict us with variety of worldly crosses ; and therefore doth sweetly and compassionately give us more peace and comfort at home in our own hearts : or, it may be, he means to make us eminent objects of disgrace, reproach, and slander in the world, and even from those who " sit in the gate," for our forwardness and excellency of zeal ; and therefore, out of a gracious tender-heartedness, gives us both more calmness in conscience and contentment in outward things ; or, perhaps, he may lay all these upon us, suffer us to be tried with ill tongues, with troubles without and terrors within ; but even then undoubtedly " his grace shall be sufficient for us : " so wise and so merciful is our blessed God. Only, first, let us take heed (though in our own apprehensions and misdeeming we may pretend and except never so plausibly) that we never prescribe unto him how, in what stint or measure he should afflict us. Secondly. That we never ward or put off any blow from his own heavenly hand, men, or creatures, with the wound of conscience ; never decline any ill by ill means. Thirdly, That we learn and labour to profit by and make the right use of all his corrections. Fourthly. And ever magnify the glory of his mercy and wisdom in sparing us any way, his tender-hearted taking notice where we are weakest, and not so able to bear his severer visitations ; but specially, that he ever pitches upon that affliction which doth our souls most good, and serves most effectually to procure,

protect, and promote the soundness, safety, and flourishing of our spiritual state. Well then, for my purpose, and thy support, since our most holy God deals thus with all that are not cast away; to wit, sorts out unto them those several crosses and corrections, which out of his unsearchable wisdom and spiritual necessity of their souls he sees most fit to keep them humble, obedient, and in awe, take thou up, and in good part, this cross of thine, while it pleaseth God to exercise thee with it as thy portion. Others, though free from this, yet have their proportion and proper potion, and that perhaps in a bitter cup and from a more smarting rod. It may be it goes well with thee in other respects\*, in which, wert thou yet crossed, the physic would not take, nor work so kindly. Our all-wise heavenly Physician knows this dreadful dart will only do it. Who knows whether, if thou wert not haunted with these foul furies, I mean furious injections of the devil's own forge, thou mightest grow worldly, lukewarm, too passionate, proud, secure; or something which God would not have thee, and would be infinitely for thy hurt?

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## CHAP. XX.

The Second Part of the speculative way of curing the former Malady, which is by Counsel. Two things which Men must be counselled to practise.

BE thou therefore patient under them, humbled by them, make a holy and profitable use of them, comfort thyself in them by these considerations commended unto thee for that purpose, and learn how to behave thyself about them by the following counsels:—

1. As at their first approach and offer thou oughtest to stir up and steel thy heart to improve the strength and stoutness of all the powers of they soul; to make a mighty and forcible resistance, lifting up at the same instant thy heart in a bitter complaint against the cruelty and malice of the adversary, a strong cry for the rebuking of him and restraint of his hellish spite, with extreme detestation of all such devilish filth, so take heed that thou never revolve in thy mind those his blasphemous temptations; but say with

\* And yet I know some horribly afflicted in this kind, and yet in some respects as outwardly miserable as can be imagined; but then know, that the merciful power of God is mightily improved for extraordinary support.

Luther, "a kite or cormorant may fly over my house, but sure shall never roost or nestle there." Or as another, "a ravenous and hateful bird may begin to build in mine arbour, I cannot hinder it; but I will never fail to pull it down as often as she begins." The devil will inject whether thou wilt or no; but resolve to suffer them by no means to have any rest or residence in thine imagination. If thou be a minister (and the holiest men are Satan's special mark that he would gladly hit with his fiery darts), take advice which hath proved sovereign and helpful to beat back and banish these temptations of blasphemy. The mind of every man of God instructed to the kingdom of heaven is, as I suppose, still digging into the rich mines of divine truth, diving into the great mystery of Christ, ever discoursing in itself for, or doing something for the advancement of the work of the Lord, their ministerial affairs, and welfare of souls. Temporizers indeed, seldom and self-preachers, are not much troubled this way, neither take these things so to heart. They seek more to advance themselves than save souls: their chief study is, if they be not downright good-fellows, as they call them, either to grow rich, or rise, and so they are still negotiating industriously about the one, or plotting ambitiously for the other. But were they of Paul's mind, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. ix, 16); of Chrysostom's temper, who was wont to tremble when he took into consideration those words, Heb. xiii, 17, "For they watch over your souls, as they that must give account;" of Austin's resolution for not meddling in worldly matters, wherein to deal he deemed a very tiring and tedious vexation, and was never well but when he was wading in the depths of Christian Religion, and busied about the things of God: I say, if they were thus affected, they would be such as they ought, and as I now suppose, to wit, have many webs, as it were, of their holy work in their heads, all at once; many ministerial tasks in agitation and on foot still. Some part of the day they would, perhaps, search and pierce into the pith and marrow of some scripture text; at another time wrestle with the difficulties and knotty distinctions of some popish or other controversy. At another, discuss and drive unto a resolution some perplexed and intricate case of conscience, &c. Well, then, thus supposed, upon the very first proposal of these monstrous and hideous thoughts, presently divert and resort to the hardest of all those irons thou hast in the fire, if I may so speak, and that which hath need of most hammering; I mean, to the most difficult and weighty points of all those several spiritual businesses thou hadst last in thy brain, and

single out that particular which did most puzzle and put thy understanding to it. Whereabouts, when the strength, heat, and intensity of thy whole soul is spent and improved, not only other impertinent wanderings and vagaries, but these idle and irksome injections also, will more easily vanish and be gone. Let others also proportionably upon such occasions, besides other helps, have recourse to the most troublesome and over-mastering part of their honest employments, to the chiefest and most needful affair of their lawful callings.

2. In temptations of this nature, never set thyself to dispute with the devil; he is an old sophist, of above five thousand years standing in the school of hideous temptations and hellish policies, and thou art but a novice. He hath many methods, devices, and depths, which thy shallow forecast cannot possibly fathom. Direct opposition by reasons and replies stirreth up the outrageous blasphemer to grow more furious, and hereby we give him greater advantage, more matter of molestation and mischief, and may so plunge ourselves further into an intricate maze of horror and confused distractions. Our blessed captain, Christ Jesus, may be a pattern for us in this point. When he was tempted "to fall down and worship Satan;" he reasoneth not the case, but repels him with vehement, extraordinary detestation and disdain: "Get thee hence, Satan." It will therefore be our best wisdom at such a time to turn from him; and as Hezekiah spread his blasphemous letter, so to lay open his fury before the Lord, crying mightily unto him, entreating him even for his own honour's sake to vindicate the purity of his great majesty, and excellency of his unspotted glory, from this hellish filth and horrible villany of the malicious fiend: that he would cast it as dung upon the tempter's face; and in the passion and blood of Christ, free fully, and for ever, our poor souls, trembling under the hideousness of his malice and cruelty, from the guilt, stain, terror, and assault of all such abhorred and prodigious blasphemy.

In that other terrible temptation also, to self-murder, many much wrong themselves this way. In managing this fiery dart, the adversary deals by way of argument too, and presses reasons, such as they are, upon the tempted; sometimes extremely absurd, especially if the party be something more simple and ignorant; sometimes exceedingly subtle, if he be of better understanding and capacity. And thus: "It is soon done, and the pain quickly past; thou art likely thus to languish and lie in misery all thy life long. The longer thou livest, the larger will be the score of thy sins,

and so thy torments in hell more horrible hereafter. If it be once done, it will appear to have been God's decree, and I hope thou wilt not oppose the accomplishment of that. Do what thou canst, thou wilt be damned when all is done \*." Now in this case if thou debate the matter with the devil, and begin to confer, thou art likely enough to be more and more confounded and entangled with inextricable astonishment and danger to be utterly undone, and suddenly blown up by the mine of his soul-murdering sophistry. But if, according to the example and practice of thy Lord and Master, who hath begun unto thee in this bitter cup, "is afflicted in all thy afflictions," and ever stands by thee as a victorious commander and conqueror in all such assaults; first abominate and beat back this base and bloody motion with infinite indignation and loathing, "Avaunt, Satan!" and then immediately lay hold on the sword of the Spirit, and keep him at the point of it, and then assuredly all the devils in hell cannot hurt thee. Tell him, that against his vile and villanous suggestions and all the subtleties and sophistry with which he seconds it, this is thy only answer, even the precise, holy, and everlasting countermand of his and thy Creator, the mighty Lord of heaven and earth, "Thou shalt not kill." Now if it be a crimson and crying sin, the most deadly opposite and desperate cut-throat of charity to kill another, and fasteneth such a deep and inexpiable stain upon the face of a whole kingdom, that it cannot be razed out "but by the blood of him that shed it" (Numb. xxxv, 33); how execrable and heinous then is this, and what depth of hell and height of horror doth that abhorred miscreant deserve and may expect, who makes

\* Here if thou answer—Yea, but in the mean time it is better to spend the remainder of my few and evil days upon earth than in hell, he will reply, But so thou shalt increase thy sins here, and by consequence thy hellish pains hereafter; to which if thou rejoine, But the heinousness of self-murder and horribleness of despair may appear more vile and execrable in the eyes of God than all the other sins I may commit to the last period of my natural course;—he may then hideously roar, But so thou mayest both go on to increase thy sins and make away thyself at last, and where art thou then? &c. I know him to have thus thrown his fiery darts into trembling hearts one after another with extreme subtilness and cruelty; and therefore in these cases do not admit of any dispute or conference with him; but upon the very first assault (for who would hear him talk that will tell never a true word, and is thy sworn enemy?) be ever sure presently to lay hold upon the word of God, that weapon of proof which serves like a sword, not only for defence, as all the other pieces of armour, but also for offence. Beat back with undaunted resolution and confidence this devilish dart, and stop for ever the mouth of the tempter with the contrary charge of the most holy and all-powerful God— "Thou shalt not kill."

away with himself? For the rule of charity, whereby we love one another, is proportioned by that charity whereby a man loves himself. If the devil be able to dissolve and disannul the most absolute, perfect, and just law of the Most High, who though all other things besides may be something in possibility which as yet they are not in act; yet himself is actually and everlastingly whatsoever he may be, and cannot hereafter be that which now he is not; and so by consequence is without all "variableness or shadow of turning:" I say, if the "prince of darkness" can reverse this law of the "Father of lights," "Thou shalt not murder;" thou mayest well say thou wilt then think of another answer. But till that be, which is more than infinitely impossible ever to come to pass, thou wilt rather lie in the miseries of hell upon earth (which indeed were incomparably better), than breaking God's blessed law, go down into the grave in a bloody coffin made by thy own hands only at the devil's bidding. Can this madness ever be matched? for a man, besides self-severing the soul from his body before the time, by a more heinous and unnatural villany than murdering of his own father (for every man is naturally next unto himself), and sending it suddenly covered with blood, by becoming his own butcher and hangman, unto the dreadful tribunal of the all-powerful God, the most certain and severe revenger of all bloodshed; to bring also abundance of unnecessary shame, grief, and hopeless mourning upon friends, kindred, husband, children, parents; a reproachful stain and brand upon house, name, burial, posterity, &c.; and that merely at the instance, and upon the most absurd, ridiculous, and senseless suggestion of the arch-murderer, thy mortal and immortal enemy; against sense, reason, nature, religion, scripture, God's direct command to the contrary, even heathen philosophy, heaven and earth!

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## CHAP. XXI.

Three other things which men must be counselled to practise for the Cure of the former Malady.

3. AVOID idleness, solitariness, and too much secrecy; three main advantages for the adversary, which he watchfully apprehending, and plying industriously, works a world of mischief upon afflicted souls, in their spiritual miseries. Idleness lays a man open to all hellish snares and tempta-

tions, makes the heart, like unmanured ground, fit for nothing but the wildest and rankest weeds of lust, luxury, lewd company, the universal inordinateness of original corruption to domineer, rage, and do what it will. Like standing pools, naturally prepared and pregnant to breed and feed the vermin and venom of vilest thoughts and unnatural filth. Like thoroughfares for Satan's most hideous and horrible injections to wander and walk up and down in without restraint or remedy. Solitariness, besides its native property and power to make sad, increase melancholy, and aggravate fears, doth in this case, more than any, bring a heavy woe: "Woe to him that is alone:" for if the weak Christian fall, "he hath not another to help him up" (Eccles. iv, 10). He may there be surprized, yield and be foiled, before he get into such company as might happily have prevented it, or supported him in the temptation. Too much secrecy and concealment may cause the wound of a terrified conscience to bleed inward, rankle, fester, and grow desperate; whereas seasonable discovery might have cured and comforted it. Horror arising from the apprehension of such uncouth and monstrous thoughts, kept close, and dammed up in the man's own breast, may swell so high, that the poor soul may be in great danger to be wofully drowned and overwhelmed by it; which had it had vent betime, eased and emptied itself into some holy and faithful bosom, might, by divine and discreet counsel, by little and little dried up quite. I have known him who did bite in and keep close in his bosom this temptation of blasphemy the space of about twenty years; all which while the devil did tyrannize extremely, and keep him almost in continual terror. He thought there was never man had such vile and prodigious thoughts as he; and if the world knew what they were, he would be abhorred as a monster of men, and the loathsomest creature upon earth; most worthy to be utterly exterminated and rooted out of the society and confines of mankind. And hereupon many and many a time, when he apprehended any opportunity, or had any means offered to make himself away, he was tempted thereunto, principally upon this ground, that it was pity such a horrible blasphemer (for so he supposed) should any longer breathe. But at last hearing the nature, manner, and remedy of these hideous injections discovered by the ministry, afterward privately informing himself further and more fully from God's messenger, was happily taken off the rack for the time to come, and most wonderfully refreshed. And therefore take heed of keeping the devil's counsel. The tempted in this kind may do well to be still conversant in

religious duties, honest workers of their lawful callings, company of skilful experienced soul physicians, or one or other comfortable employment.

4. Settle in thy heart a peremptory impregnable resolution never to entertain any thought of that great majesty and glory above, of the most holy and ever-blessed Trinity, or any thing thereabout, but such only as is revealed and represented unto thee in God's book. Whatsoever is objected by carnal reason to the contrary, or injected by the devil any ways to deprave the divineness of that glorious truth, ought to be rejected as cursed, false, and execrable. And therefore, when that hellish Nimrod shall at any time hunt and chase thine affrighted soul with these blasphemous hell-hounds, be sure ever to take sanctuary in the oracles of God, and keep thee close and safe under this covert. Whatsoever is not comprehended within the confines of that sacred pale, warranted by holy writ, the sovereign touchstone of all heavenly truth, let it be abhorred, and retorted as dung upon the face of the tempter. That sense and apprehension of the Deity and divine things which is not sucked from the breasts of the two Testaments, is in this regard to be reputed rank poison, repelled and abominated with infinite indignation and disdain. And for further help herein, when thou findest thyself thus followed with the violent and incessant incursions of this furious folly, call often and seriously to mind that accursed brand which the book of God hath set upon the adversary, that he is the "father of lies," and let that still continue a more resolute rejection and contempt of whatsoever comes from him. Suppose a raging madman should follow thee up and down all the day long, and tell thee that thy father or special friend were a stone, a bird, a tree, a toad, or whatsoever is viler or more absurd; wouldst thou hereupon entertain and harbour in thy mind any mis-impression or monstrous persuasion of the party? I trow not (only his senseless clamour and restless raving would be very irksome, troublesome, and unwelcome); especially since thou art furnished with a clear demonstrative light out of natural philosophy, that he is a reasonable creature, and thyself seest in him the face and favour, the shape and proportion of a man. Proportionably Satan, that bloodthirsty maniac of hell, out of that madness at which heaven and earth may stand amazed, solicits thee to admit such and such horrible and hideous conceits of thy dearest Lord, his Son, and sacred word. (Ah! cursed fiend, that ever thou shouldst discover such prodigious malice against thy glorious Maker!) Now God infinitely forbid that this should cause the least alteration, or

any diminution at all of thy lowliest, most reverent, adoring, and divinest thoughts of so great a God. For have recourse to the holy records of all sound, supernatural, and saving knowledge; I mean, the word of life with which thou oughtest to consult, and to which only thou art confined in this case; and thou shalt find him to be the "only one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost\*." And besides thou mayest grasp as it were, and feel between thy fingers as it were, even in every creature, his greatness and goodness, majesty and might, power and providence. "In the glorious lights of heaven," saith a noble writer, "we perceive a shadow of his Divine countenance; in his provision for all that live, his manifold goodness; and lastly, in creating and making existent the world universal by the absolute art of his own word, his power and almightiness; which power, light, virtue, wisdom, and goodness, being all but attributes of one simple essence, and one God, we in all admire, and in part discern *per speculum creaturarum*, that is in the disposition, order, and variety of celestial and terrestrial bodies; terrestrial in their strange and manifold diversities; celestial in their beauty and magnitude, which in their continual and contrary motions are neither repugnant, intermixed, nor confounded. By these potent effects we approach to the knowledge of the omnipotent Cause, and by these motions their almighty Mover." Whosoever therefore that most implacable and everlasting enemy to God's glory and the good of his children shall go about to pervert and cross by his blasphemous injections these sober and sacred conceptions of the thrice-glorious and ever-blessed Deity, planted in thy mind by his own word and this visible world, bid him, by the example of thy Lord and Master, "avoid and avaunt;" trample upon his hellish spite, appeal unto God's righteous throne with protestations of thine innocency; damning them unto the pit of hell in thy judgment, and hating them not without horror from the very heart-root; and so truly resisting them, crying mightily unto God for

\* Articles of Religion; Art. 1. — Exod. xx, 3; Deut. vi, 4; Psalm xviii, 31; Mal. ii, 10; 1 Cor. viii, 4; Psalm lxxxiv, 2; 2 Cor. vi, 16; 2 Chron. xv, 3; Jer. x, 10; John xvii, 3; 1 Thes. i, 9; Psalm cii, 24, 26, 27; Dan. vi, 26; Psalm civ; John iv, 24; 2 Cor. iii, 17; 1 Sam. xv, 29; Hos. xi, 9; Ezek. x, 5; 2 Cor. vi, 18; Revel. xi, 17; 1 Tim. i, 17; Rom. xvi, 27; Psalm cxlvii, 5; cvi, 1; and cvii, 1.

pardon, whereinsoever thou shalt fail about them, and for power against them, and then possess thy humble soul in patience and peace.

5. Being humbled by them, making a holy use of them, perusing and applying the considerations and counsels in hand for comfort in them, and conquest over them; do not by any means continue to afflict and torture thy spirit about them. Let them now pass away and be packing; abandon them with a holy detestation, contempt, and slighting, without any such dismayedness and terror, as most unworthy of any longer taking to heart, or notice of; much less of that anxiety and trouble as to terrify, indispose, and disable thee for a cheerful discharge of either of thy callings, particular or general. Divines hold even godly sorrow unseasonable when it unfitteth the body or mind to good duties, or to a good and cheerful manner of doing them; how much more would they not have these hellish distractions and intrusions to dishearten thee in this kind? But least of all of that pestilent prevailing, as to fill thine heart with extraordinary astonishment, horror, and doubting, whether such monstrous injections be incident to sanctified souls, a saving state, and habitation of the Holy Ghost, and so to put thee into a habit of heavy walking and secret sadness, by reason of continual questioning the soundness of thy conversion, the constancy of God's love unto thee, former assurance of an immortal crown, and whether it be possible that Jesus Christ should dwell in a soul haunted with such horrible thoughts; procurement of which miseries and molestations is the adversary's only aim; for so irameasurably malicious is he, that if he cannot plunge thee into the pit of hell and everlasting flames in the world to come, yet will he labour might and main to keep thee upon the rack, and in as much terror as he can possibly all thy life long in this vale of tears. Suffer then this advice to sink seriously into thy heart: being enlightened, rightly informed, and directed about them, let them no longer astonish thy spirit, detain thee in horror, hurt thy heart, or hinder thee in any duty to God or man, or in a humble, comfortable, and confident walking with thy God as thou art wont, or of thy former sweet communion with Jesus Christ. And the rather, because, First, It is the tempter's earnest end only out of pure spite to put this imposture and unnecessary vexing perplexities upon thee. Secondly, The more thou art troubled with them and takest them to heart (for that is it he would have), the more violently and villanously will he press them upon thee and terrify. Thirdly, They are not thine, but his fearful sins; he alone must answer for

them at that great and last day, and thou go free. It is his malicious madness, of such a prodigious nature and notoriousness as is beyond imagination and above all admiration, only fit for a devil. That he may trouble thee temporarily, he mightily aggravates his own eternal torment!

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## CHAP. XXII.

The Experimental Way of curing the former Malady.

IN a second place let me tender unto thee an antidote, which hath been found sovereign and successful this way.

The sum of it is this:—Let the tempted Christian labour to work and extract by the blessing of God some spiritual good out of the horrible hell of these most hateful, abominable, blasphemous suggestions. And if Satan once see that thou suckest honey out of his poison, comfort out of his cruelty, medicine out of his malice, he will have no heart nor hope to go on; no courage nor contentment to continue the temptation.

Take it in the sense, if not in the same words, without any variation, or enlargement, as it was applied and prospered:—

“Spiteful and malicious fiend, cursed enemy to heaven and earth; by the mercies of God, though thy purpose be most pestilent, yet thou shalt not hurt or have any advantage against me hereby. Thy base and dunghill injections, tending to the dishonour of my God, and my Christ, &c. shall make me,

“1. More hate thine infinitely hateful and revengeful malice against that thrice-glorious and ever-blessed Majesty above.

“2. With more feeling and dearness to adore and love the glory and sweetness of my God and my Redeemer. For the more excessive and endless I feel thy spite against him, the more I know is his incomprehensible excellency and worth.

“3. To pray oftener and more fervently that my God would rebuke thee, and cast this extreme malice of thine as dung upon thine own face.

“4. To be still more humbled under the hand of my mighty Lord; because I cannot be more humbled, and with more resolution and abhorrence abominate and abandon

such prodigiously senseless and hellish blasphemies of his (for I am sure they are none of mine) into the bottomless bottom of that darkest dungeon: in the blackest horror whereof, they were most maliciously and monstrously hatched.

“ 5. To take up a strong argument and answer against another of thy cursed injections tending to Atheism, and the not being of those endless joys above. Because I most plainly and palpably feel thee, an invisible spirit, casting into my imagination such horrid, absurd, and ridiculously impious thoughts, which cannot possibly spring ordinarily or naturally from any power or possibility of mine own soul. I know thereby and assure myself, that there is also an infinite, most wise, and glorious Spirit, which created both me and thee; and will in due time chain thee up for ever in the pit of hell, and bring me at length, by the blessed merit of his only dearest Son's bloodshed, into the bosom of his own glory and everlasting bliss.

“ 6. To confirm mine own heart with stronger assurance (which is no mean benefit) that I undoubtedly belong unto God and am in a gracious state. For thou well knowest, and so doth mine own soul, that thou never troubledst me to any purpose with these ugly blasphemous thoughts, while I yet lay stark dead in sins and trespasses, and drowned full deep in vanity and lust; in carnal looseness and sensual courses. Then thou, being the strong man, possessedst me wholly, and all was quiet, because all was thine. But being now happily rescued out of thy clutches by a mightier than thou, and having blessedly broke the prison by the help of the Holy Ghost, thou followest me with this fiery malice and the most prodigious yellings of that infernal pit. And I am persuaded it is a pestilent piece of thy deepest cunning, very rarely to vex civil worldlings; those that lie in any gross sin; or any which thou keepest fast and secure in thy snares with such affrighting and grisly temptations. For thou craftily fearest, lest striking that horror into the heart of a natural man, which is wont to arise from such hellish fogs and blasphemous filth, thou shouldst thereby give him occasion to renounce, detest, and drive him out of thine accursed slavery, and cause him to cast about for a new master.

“ 7. To take notice of some special corruption, lust, passion, or spiritual distemper in one kind or other, over which I have not holden that hand, hatred, wakeful eye, as it were meet. For I am persuaded my God, out of his merciful goodness, aims at and intends some such good unto my soul, by enlarging thy chain, and suffering thee at this

time to afflict me in this uncouth manner with this hell-empoisoned dart something extraordinarily. I have not been so sensible of thy other temptations, far more ensnaring in sin, though not so terrifying; and therefore my gracious Lord may suffer thee at this time thus to thrust out thy horns, as I may say, in this most horrible and outrageous encounter, that I may be thoroughly advertised what an adversary I have; and so more mind and mark him, for fear of much secret and sudden mischief by my security and neglect, and be more quickened to an universal watchfulness against all his methods, devices, and depths; as well his subtle and sly insinuations in the glory of an angel, as his impetuous and furious assaults in the shape of a foul fiend. Some trouble, cross, heavy accident, disgrace, discontentment; some great and weighty affair on foot, unseasonable entertainments, sad news from abroad, or something or other, hath too often stolen my heart from that full and fruitful attention to holy duties which was due, and that even upon the Lord's day. And I can now remember, and my conscience tells me upon this occasion, that I have not watched over the many idle, impertinent wanderings and vagaries of my imagination, as I ought; but given so far a way unto them, that they have justly brought upon me an uncomfortable deadness of affection, barrenness and indisposition in the use of the ordinances, and conversing with God by meditation, prayer, hearing of the word, singing of psalms, examination of the conscience, and other religious exercises, and I know not into what further spiritual misery they may lead me; and therefore in great mercy the most wise God goes now graciously about to correct and mortify the vanity, worldliness, distractions, and misemployment of my thoughts, even by the terrors of these thy most horrible and hellish injections. And by the help of God I will follow the meaning and conduct of his holy hand for a right use of them, and attaining that happy end which he doth so mercifully intend.

“ 8. To gather skill, experience, and dexterity, for the raising and reviving of others hereafter, hanging down the head, heavy-hearted, and maliciously haunted in the same kind, by discovering unto them thy bootless malice, the sovereign medicines I have met with in the ministry of the word, and the good I gained to my soul hereby, by the help of that Almighty hand which can turn the darkest midnight into the brightest morning, and produce a medicinable potion out of the rankest poison.

“ Methinks this heaven, which by Divine blessing I extract out of thy hell, this healing virtue which I draw

from thy vilest venom, this spiritual good which I gather from thy devilish spite, should make thee weary of this way, and desist from troubling me. I trust in my God it will shortly cause thee to cast away this weapon, and quit the field quite. For thou ever infinitely hatest and hinderest all thou canst the glory of God, all exercise and increase of grace, and the welfare of my poor soul, which by accident and his sanctifying power, who ever turns all things to the best to them that love him, are all happily advanced, furthered, and enlarged by this raging and pestilent rancour of thine.

“And who would not think, were not the incredible depth of thy malice and madness equally unfathomable by the wit of man, but that thou shouldst the rather give over, because these Satanical suggestions to me that resists are but crosses and corrections; but in thee, most outrageous and execrable blasphemies, which will mightily hereafter add to the heaviness and horror of thine everlasting chains of darkness and damnation ‘at the judgment of the great day.’”







