

GENERAL DIRECTIONS FOR A COMFORTABLE WALKING WITH GOD.

by Robert Bolton

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.”

Genesis 6:8-9

IN THIS DREADFUL STORY of the old world’s degeneration and destruction, here stands an illustrious star, shining, fair in the darkest midnight of SATAN’s universal reign; I mean Noah, a preacher of righteousness, to whose family alone the true worship of God was confined, when all the world besides lay drowned in idolatry and paganism, ready to be swallowed up in an universal grave of waters.

Now in this story of Noah, so highly honored with freedom from the sinful contagion of those desperate times, and happily exempted from the judgment upon the earth, I consider,

First, The cause of such a singular, blessed preservation; which was the free grace and favor of God: “but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,” ver. 8.

Secondly, the renown of Noah’s name: in that he stands

here as the father of the new world: “These are the generations of Noah,” ver. 9.

Thirdly. The description, 1. Of Noah’s personal goodness: 2. Of his preservation: 3. Of his posterity.

The description of his personal goodness stands in the end of verse 9, “Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God.” Where we find him honored with three noble attributes, which make up the character of a complete Christian. 1. Honesty. 2. Uprightness. 3. Piety. And they receive much lustre from a circumstance of time: “in his generations:” which were many and mainly corrupt.

Without, any further unfolding of my text, I collect from the first point, (wherein I find God’s free grace to be the cause of Noah’s preservation,) that the free grace and favor of God is the first mover and fountain of all our good. All praise then is due unto Jehovah, the author of all our good, the fountain of all our bliss, the well-spring of life, whereby we live, and move, and have our being; our natural being, the being of our outward state; our gracious being, the everlastingness of our glorious state. Were the holiest heart upon earth enlarged to the vast comprehension of this great world’s wideness; nay, made capable of all the glorious hallelujahs offered to Jehovah, both by all the militant and triumphant church; yet would it come infinitely short of sufficiently magnifying, admiring, and adoring the inexplicable mystery, and bottomless depth

of this free mercy of GOD, the fountain and first mover of all our good! We may, and are bound to bless GOD, for all the means, instruments, and second causes, whereby it pleases him to convey good things unto us: but we must rest principally at the well-head of all our welfare, Jehovah, blessed forever. We receive a great deal of comfort and refreshment from the moon and stars; but we must chiefly thank the sun: from the great rivers also; but, the main sea is the fountain. Angels, ministers, and men may pleasure us; but Jehovah is the principal. Let us then imitate those lights of heaven, and rivers of the earth; do all the good we can with those good things God has given us by his instruments; and then return all the praise unto the Sun of Righteousness, and Sea of our salvation.

From the second point in these words, “These are the generations of Noah; (whereas the memorial of all the families upon earth besides, lay buried in the gulf of everlasting oblivion, as their bodies in the universal grave of waters; the family of Noah is not only preserved; but his generations registered in the book of GOD, and conveyed along towards the Lord JESUS, as his progenitors, and precedent royal line.) I observe, that personal goodness is a good means to bring safety, honor, and many comfortable blessings upon posterity. Because,

1. Parents, professing religion in truth, make conscience of praying for their children before they have them, as

did Isaac and Hannah: when they are quick in the womb, as did Rebeckah: when they are born, as did Zachariah: in the whole course of their life, as did Job: at their death, as did Isaac. And prayers, we know, are for the procuring of all favors at the hands of GOD, either for ourselves, or others, the most sovereign means we can possibly use.

2. Godly parents do infinitely more desire to see the true fear of God planted in their children's hearts, than the diadem of the whole earth set upon their heads. And therefore their principal care is, by a good example, religious education, daily instruction, loving admonitions, seasonable reproofs, restraint from wicked company, and by all the best means, and utmost endeavors, to leave them gracious, when they go out of this world. And "Godliness, (says Paul,) has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It gives right and full value to all the true honor, blessings, and comforts, which are to be had' in heaven or in earth.

We have, Thirdly, a description of Noah's spiritual state, consisting of, 1. His justness. 2. Sincerity, 3. Piety.

I collect from the first branch of his character, that every truly religious man, is also a just and true-dealing man. From the second, that sincerity is the sinew and touchstone of true Christianity. But these two I have so often pressed in the course of my ministry, that I will pass by them at this time; only making the following observation. Look! what kind of honesty to men that is, which is

not accompanied with religion towards God; the same is that religion towards GOD, which is not attended with honesty to men. Dishonest religion, irreligious honesty, insincere religion and honesty, are all out of the right path. If you have respect only to the commandments of the first table, and outward performance of religious services; but neglect the duties of the second, you art but a pharisee and formal professor. If you deal justly with thy neighbor, and yet be a stranger to the mystery of godliness, you art but a mere civil man. If you put on an outward face only of conformity to both, and yet be true-hearted to neither, you art but a gross hypocrite. Bear thyself holily towards GOD, honestly towards man, and true-heartedly towards both, or you art no body in CHRIST's kingdom; but still in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. Put on righteousness and true holiness, in this life, or you shall never put on a crown of glory in the life to come.

Again, that which adds lustre to Noah's character is the circumstance of time, that is, "in his generations," which were many, and mainly corrupt. Noah stood out, and cleaved unto God through so many ages; and against so wicked a world: so likewise the true Christian must stand at staves' end with the corruptions of the time. Let everyone who has given his name to CHRIST, ever count it his crown and comfort, to hold a strong and unconquerable counter-motion to the courses of the world. Let him still discover the true nobleness of his Christian spirit,

and of a mind spiritually generous, by gathering vigor, growing invincible, from the very oppositions of the wicked, and villanies of the time. It was the saying of a moral heathen, "That to do well, where was no danger, was a common thing; but to do well where was both peril and opposition, was the peculiar office of a man of virtue:" much more, say I, of a man of God.

"And Noah walked with God." Walking with God is the flower of all Noah's excellencies. It is the crown of the Christian's character, and the duty and property of every true Christian. By walking with GOD, I mean, a sincere endeavor to dispose all our thoughts, words, and deeds; our whole conversation, in reverence and fear, with humility and singleness of heart, as in the sight of an invisible GOD, under the perpetual presence of his all-seeing, glorious eye; and by consequence, to enjoy by faith, an unutterable sweet communion and humble familiarity with his holy Majesty; in a word, to live in heaven upon earth. God's covenant with Abraham, and in him, with all the faithful unto the world's end, requires this. The practice and protestations of the servants of God set a seal unto it. Enoch's walking with God was an happy preparative to his translation to glory. "The Lord before whom I walk," (says Abraham,) will do thus and thus. "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living," says David. "O Lord God of Israel," says Solomon, "there is no God like thee in the heaven, or in the earth; which keepest covenant, and showest mercy unto thy servants,-

that walk before thee with all their hearts.” “I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart,” says Hezekiah. “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men,” says Paul: which sounds the same way. “Let their money perish with them, who esteem all the gold in the world worth one day’s society with JESUS CHRIST and his Holy Spirit,” said that noble Marquis of Vico, well experienced in an heavenly conversing with God.

And it must needs be so: for 1. Howsoever natural men do not dare to draw near to that GOD, who to them is “a consuming fire;” yet all those, who have truly tasted how gracious and glorious he is, find their hearts, out of a secret sense of God’s love unto them first, in-flamed with infinite desire to live under the influence of his pleased countenance, to enjoy his holy majesty with constant peace, and an humble spiritual access to and acquaintance with him continually. The true Christian’s spirit of prayer, exercise of repentance, temptations, and troubles from SATAN; pressures from the world, faintness of faith, want of spiritual strength, assault of some special sin, sweetness of meditation, daily favors showered down’ upon him without number, and above measure; fore-thought of the great and last account, motions of the blessed Spirit; but above all, the inexplicable blessedness, goodness, and excellency of that highest majesty, drives him to his God many times a day.

2. All God's love unto us; his loving-kindnesses, protections, preservations, bounty, patience, Divine illuminations, spiritual blessings: in a word, every link of that golden chain of mercy, grace, and glory, far thicker set with blessings in all kinds, than the heaven with stars, should be so many strong chains, to draw our hearts to delight in him, and with an humble familiarity to converse with his Holy Majesty. Oh! then, let us infinitely love, and learn exactly the heavenly art of "walking with God!" For a more comfortable guiding us wherein, give me leave to premise these quickening preparatives.

I. Look that you live not in any known sin, in thine heart, life, or calling. For if so, you art so far from any possibility of walking with GOD, that you wearest the devil's brand, and art most certainly one of his. If SATAN keep possession, but by one reigning sin, it will be thine everlasting ruin. You shall then be so far from ever enjoying any holy acquaintance with GOD, that you shall be destroyed body and soul for ever. One breach in the walls of a city, exposeth it to the surprise of an enemy. One leak in a ship neglected will sink it at length into the bottom of the sea. The stab of a pen-knife to the heart will as well slay a man, as all the daggers that killed Cesar in the senate-house.

And because the bosom-sin is SATAN's strongest hold, his tower of greatest confidence and security, and most

powerful to keep a man's heart from all holy acquaintance with God; I will, in a few words, labor to enlighten and disentangle any one, who unfeignedly desires an utter divorce from this bosom-devil, by telling him first, what it is: secondly, what is his: thirdly, how he may be deceived about it.

First, As in every man there is one humor predominant; so also one work of darkness. And it is that which his corrupt and original crookedness singles out to feed upon with greatest sweetness. Afterward, by custom, it grows so powerful, that it draws unto it the heat of his desires, and strongest workings of his heart; and at the height, by an irresistible tyranny, it makes all occasions and occurrences, religion, conscience, credit with the world, body, soul, and outward state, service-able and contributory unto it, as to the devil's viceroy, domineering In the wasted conscience.

Secondly, You may discover what thine is by such marks as these: 1. It is that which thy truest friends, thine own conscience and the finger of God in the ministry, many times meets with, and checks thee for. 2. It is that, which if it break into act, thine enemies most eagerly observe, and object, as matter of thy greatest disgrace..3. It is that, which you art most loath to leave, art oftenest tempted unto, have least power to resist, and which most hinders the resignation of thy soul and body, heartily and unreservedly to God. 4. It is that, which God most frequently

corrects in thee, even in the acknowledgment of thy self-accusing heart. It may be, at several times you have been afflicted with some heavy cross, loss of a child, bodily pain, trouble Qf mind: now in all these, upon the first smarting apprehension, thy conscience, if any whit awakened, of its own accord, seizes upon that sin we now seek for, as the principal Achan and author of all thy misery. 5. It is that which you loathest to acknowledge. And therefore you beatest thy brains to devise evasions, excuses, extenuations, whole cart-loads of fig-leaves with which to colour and cloak this foul fiend. 6. Thoughts, plots, and projects about it, ordinarily seize upon thine heart, at thy very first waking; if they have not broken off thy sleep, and troubled thee in thy dreams. 7. In the darkness of the night, if you art suddenly awakened with some dreadful thunder, lightening, or terrible tempest, (if thine heart be not altogether hardened,) the guilt and accusations of thy beloved sin is wont to come into thy mind in the first place, and with greatest terror.

Thirdly, A man may be deceived in conceiving that he is quite delivered from his bosom-sin, and yet it may be but a mere exchange, or some other mistake. This gross, affected self-imposture, may be seen in such cases as these: 1. He may change the outward form of it. For instance; whereas the same sin of covetousness does express itself by usury, bribery, crushing the poor of the same trade, over-reaching, all manner of doing wrong, all kinds of oppression; he may insensibly glide out of one gulf, into

another. He may fall from one of these, being more notorious to some other of them less observed, and not so odious in the world, and yet still abide in the “chambers of death.” The foul sin of uncleanness shows itself by fornication, adultery, self-pollution, brutish and immoderate abuse of marriage. Now, he may pass from one of these pollutions to some other of them, not affrighting the conscience with such horror, and yet still he in the damnable snares of lust. 2. He may refrain from the outward acts of such hateful villainies; and yet his inward parts be still hankering after them. He may forbear the external acts of uncleanness; and yet he in speculative wantonness. 3. Nay, he may change the kind of his bosom sin, and yet it is but the exchange of one foul

fiend for another. For instance: wantonness may be his sweet sin in youth; worldliness in old age: revelling in his younger years; downright drunkenness in his declining time: prodigality may sway in some part of his life; pinching in some other: furious zeal for one while; profane irreligiousness for another. 4. When the feebleness of old age has wasted the vigor of his mind, and the boisterous heat of his affections, his darling sin may bid him adieu, without any penitent discharge; and he may say unto it, I have no more pleasure in thee. Whereupon he may conclude a final conquest over it; a secure deliverance from the guilt and curse of it. 5. He may please himself with forced cessation from it, when there is no want of good-will, as they say; but only of matter, means, or

opportunity. 6. He may, for a time, pull his neck out of this strongest yoke of SATAN, out of a slavish fear of hell; but the unclean spirit returns, and rules in him again far more imperiously, after his extra-ordinary and impatient forbearance.

Thus I have briefly intimated what a beloved sin is; what thine may be; and how you may be deceived about it. For if you wouldst truly taste how gracious the Lord is, in a sweet communion with his blessed majesty; if you wouldst be intimately acquainted with the mystery of CHRIST, wherein are hid infinite heavenly treasures, and such pleasures, “as neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive; if you wouldst ever be fitly qualified to walk humbly with thy GOD, in the way which is called holy; as you must fall out for ever with all sin, so must you principally improve all thy spiritual forces, utterly to demolish the devil’s castle; to dethrone that grand empoisoner of thy soul, (and strongest bar to keep out acquaintance, and intercourse with GOD,) thy bosom sin.

II. Build all thy resolutions for heaven and God’s service, upon that strong and purest pillar, that main and most precious principle of Christianity, self-denial. There can be no walking with GOD, no sweet communion, and sound peace at his mercy-seat, except for his sake

you be content to deny thyself, thy worldly wisdom, ex-

cellency of learning, applause with the most; thy passions, profits, pleasures, preferments, nearest friends, ease, liberty, life, any thing, every thing: and fear no loss; for all things else are nothing, to the least comfortable glimpse of God's face.,

III. Exercise thyself continually, in that only heaven upon earth, and sweetest sanctuary to an hunted soul, the life of faith: which to live in some good measure, is the duty and property of every living member of JESUS CHRIST. Love therefore, and labor to live by the power of faith., the life of salvation, sanctification, preservation.

1. Of salvation, thus: let thy humbled soul, groaning under the burden of sin, throw itself into the merciful arms of JESUS CHRIST, wounded, broken, and bleeding upon the cross; and there let it hold, and hide itself for ever in full assurance of eternal life, by virtue of that promise, John 3: 36, "He that believeth on the Son, has everlasting life." For having thus laid hold upon him, he by his Spirit does communicate first himself unto thee; then both the merit of his death for remission of thy sins; and of his active obedience for thy right to salvation; and withal, the power of his Spirit, to quicken thee to the life of grace in this world, and to raise up thy body to the life of glory.

2. Of sanctification: if you always keep thy faith, the root from which all thine other graces spring, in life and vigor, you shall pray more comfortably, be more courageously

patient, hear the Word more fruitfully, receive the sacraments more joyfully, pass the sabbaths more delightfully, confer more cheerfully, meditate more heavenly, walk in all the ways of new obedience with more strength, and conquest over corruptions. For ordinarily, every Christian shall find the exercise of other graces to be comfortable, or cold, according to the liveliness, or languishing of his faith.

3. Of preservation, both temporal and spiritual: in crosses, afflictions, and all God's outward angry visitations, by the power of such promises as those, Psal. lxxxix. 33, and 1. 15; Heb. 12: 7, 8, 11; 1 Thess. 3: 3; Acts 14: 22; Luke 9: 23. And in the course of thy particular calling: the duties and works whereof, if you discharge with conscientiousness, diligence, and prayer, you may go on with comfort, and freedom from torturing thoughtfulness; and leave the success of all thy labors unto the Lord, whatsoever it may be; resting sweetly, and ever relying upon that gracious promise, Heb. 13: 5, "I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee." Nay, in the loss of all earthly things in every kind: see Job. 3: 17, 18, "although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the field, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord: I will joy in the God of my salvation." In oppositions against the raising or restoring of spiritual buildings by the ministry of the Word: or in temptations

against a man's personal progress, and holding out unto the end; by renouncing our own strength, disclaiming the arm of flesh, and crying in every encounter, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord." In the valley of the shadow of death; by an assurance of God's merciful, omnipotent presence, Psal. 23: 4. Amidst variety of temptations, relying on those words, 1 Cor. 10: 12, James 1: 2, Isa. 30: 18. Thus in any trouble of soul, body, good name, outward state, present, or to come, you may by the sovereign power of faith working upon the Word, not only draw out the sting and expel the poison of it; but also create comfort to thy soul, and maintain it, in despite of all opposition, in a constant spiritual gladness. For all those promises, whereupon thy heavy heart in such cases may repose, are sealed with the bloody sufferings of CHRIST. And if you be in CHRIST, all are as certainly thine, as the heart in thy body, or blood in thy veins.

IV. Settle in thine heart a true estimate of the substance, power, and marrow of Christianity: which does not consist, as too many suppose, in outward shows, profession, talking; in holding strict opinions, contesting against the corruptions of the times; in the work wrought, external religious exercises, hearing, reading, conference, and the like: but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; in meekness, tender-heartedness, love; in patience, humility, contentedness; in mortification of sin, moderation of passion, and holy guidance of the tongue;

in works of mercy, justice, and truth; in fidelity, and painfulness in our callings; in reverence unto superiors, love of our enemies, an open-hearted, real, fruitful affection and bounty to God's people; in heavenly-mindedness, self-denial, the life of faith; in disesteem of earthly things, and a resolute hatred of sin; in approving our hearts in God's presence; a sweet communion with him, and a comfortable longing for the coming of the Lord JESUS.

Yet mistake me not; you must have a show, must profess and talk, if you wouldst have CHRIST to own thee at that dreadful day, Mark 8: 38. It is therefore an idle cavil of some, to say, Cannot a man be religious to him-self, except he let all the world know it For where the power of religion is, there will be the show also. Painted fire shines not, ascends not, heats not; but true fire is ever inseparably attended with these properties. If true grace be in the heart, it will shine in our words, actions, and whole conversation. He that will take shows from the substance of religion, let him take brightness from the sun. show and profession of CHRIST before men is commanded, as well as the substance and soundness of heart, Rom. 10: 9, 10. Outward exercises of religion are, as it were, the body, without which the soul of Christianity hath no existence.

V. Prize the fruition of GOD, a nearer communion with

his blessed majesty, the love and light of his countenance; and thereupon a free and frequent access, with humble boldness, unto the throne of grace, at a far higher rate, than heaven and earth; as a real foretaste of eternal joys. For to say no more at this time, if you hold an holy familiarity with GOD, and he look pleasedly upon thee, you shall grasp JESUS CHRIST more sweetly in the arms of faith; partake more plentifully of the joyful freedom; presence, and communication of his comforting Spirit; be guarded more strongly and narrowly by his glorious angels, suck more heavenly manna out of the ministry, and other ordinances; walk in safety amongst the creatures, like an unconquerable lion. And if at any time you art seized upon by any cross or calamity from any of the creatures; any trouble or temptation from man or devil; yet the refreshing beams of God's face, shining through the darkness of such discomforts, will infinitely make amends for all. The poison and curse of them shall never come near thy soul. The Lord, in the mean time, like an eagle fluttering about her nest, will most tenderly defend and protect thee, Isa. xxxi. 5; and at length most certainly come, like a young lion roaring on his prey, for thy rescue and enlargement, Isa. xxxi. 4.

VI. Labor by a constant watch to keep thy heart in a spiritual temper, still sweetly content, and fruitfully conversant in the mystery of CHRIST, and secrets of his kingdom; which you shall more easily do, if you rejoice in GOD, his Word, and graces, as thy chief joy. 2. By all

earthly things he drawn to the love of heavenly. For though God has appointed but one Sabbath in seven days, yet to a Christian every day is sanctified to be a rest from all the deeds of the flesh, wherein he is to walk with his GOD, and show forth the religious keeping of his heart, in every action of his life; so making every passage of his particular calling, a part of Christian obedience. 3. As soon as you discoverest any spiritual weakness or decay, any extraordinary assault, temptation, deadness, complain betimes; cry mightily to GOD, give him no rest, neither give over seeking, until he return unto thy soul, If ordinary means will not prevail, press upon him with extraordinary. If then he do not revive thee, wait with a patient, wakeful longing of all the powers of thy soul; and then all this while thy soul will be still in its true spiritual temper, 4. Decline watchfully all occasions of falling from thy first love, fervency, and heavenly-mindedness; as spiritual pride, desire to be rich, discontinuance of thine intimateness with the godly, neglect of thy particular calling, or daily watch over thy heart; ungodly company, formality in religious duties, coldness and customariness in the use of the means. 5. Suffer not thine affections to be set upon praise, profit, the favor of great ones, mirth, pleasure, ease, earthly contentment, and comforts, preferment, wealth, long life, or any worldly thing; but disesteem all other delights in respect of doing God's will; which should ever be unto thee meat and drink, thy only paradise upon earth.

VII. Let thy soul often soar upon the wings of faith, unto the glory of the empyrean heaven, where God dwells, and hase itself before-hand in that everlasting bliss above. Oh I think with thyself, (though it far pass the reach of any mortal thought,) what an infinite sweetness it will be, to look for ever upon the glorious body of JESUS CHRIST; and to consider that every vein of that blessed body bled to bring thee to heaven! To say nothing of the beauty of that ever-blessed place, of that joyful communion with Christian friends, and all the crowned saints, and innumerable felicities more, which surpass the comprehension of the largest heart; contemplate principally the fountain of all thy bliss: how the mighty Jehovah, God blessed for ever, will pour out of himself, perpetual rivers of unutterable joys and pleasures, upon thy glorified body and soul, through all eternity; even as the sun pours out his beams, and shining every day afresh upon the world, without emptiness or end. And with such variety, (for he is infinite,) that they shall be unto thee as fresh, as new, as sweet, as ravishing, millions of years after you have dwelt in those mansions of rest, as they were, the very first moment you enteredst that blissful place. If a man do but once a day seriously and solemnly thus cast up the eye of his faith, upon that never-fading crown of life, he may, with more affectionate freedom, and contempt of earth, have his conversation above, and turn the current of all his delights, love, and longings, with more constancy towards his heavenly home. These preparatives premised, I proceed to some

general directions for a more comfortable walking in the way that is called holy.

I. First, have a special eye to a sincere, constant, and fruitful performance of holy duties, God's services. And, to say nothing at this time of private reading the Scriptures, public hearing the Word, personal prayer, and with thy yoke-fellow, (if you live in that estate,) singing of psalms, meditation, days of humiliation, (of which you must proportionably make conscience in their due place, observing also in them the ensuing cautions: for a customary neglect of any holy duty, religious exercise, Divine ordinance, may bring a damp upon the rest, and a consumption upon the whole body of Christianity;—I say, to leave these,) I only at this time purposely advise, for the better sanctifying thyself and all about thee, to a more successful managing of affairs, either spiritual or civil; that you being master of a family, (for I single out such an one for instance,) be ever sure to glorify GOD, amidst thy people, by morning and evening sacrifice of prayers and praises. In the discharge of which main duty of Christianity, utterly neglected by the most, and empoisoned to many, by their resting only in the work wrought, take heed of declining into a form or customariness, which will most certainly draw the very life-blood and breath out of those holy businesses. Labor, therefore, by a reverent collecting of all the powers of thy soul, and fresh renewing thy watch at every several time, to preserve heart and spirit in those daily devotions. Which you

shall the better do, if you look to, 1. A right disposition before the doing: 2. A spiritual behavior in it: 3. An holy carriage afterward.

For the first, 1. Come not before God with any sin lying upon thy conscience unrepented of, or delighted in. 2. Neither with passion, wrath, or heart-burning against any. 3. Stir up thy faith, about the things desired and deprecated. Briefly, in the apostle's words, "Lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting." Bring, 1: Resolution against all sin, in respect of God: 2. Peace and appeased passions, in respect of men: 3. Assurance to be heard, in respect of thyself. Or thus: Before you fall upon thy knees, shake off three empoisoning binderances, which will clog the wings of thy prayers, that they will never be able to ascend unto heaven: outward sin, inward anger, distrust: and possess thy heart of three excellent helps: 1. A right apprehension of God's dreadfulness, purity, power. 2. A true sense of thy own vileness. 3. A hearty survey of the infiniteness of God's bounty, blessings, and compassionate forbearances towards thee.

For the second: 1. Repel with an undaunted spirit, SATAN's blasphemous injections, (if he be busy that way,) and he is ordinarily most spiteful against the best businesses, and the rather, because if they be heartily abominated, they are put upon the devil's score, and are only thy crosses, not thy sins. 2. Watch over the world with all care, that if it be possible, not an earthly thought may

creep into thy heart. 3. Strive to hold thy heart in heat, as well in confession as deprecation; in deprecation as petition; in intercession as for personal blessings; as well for purity of heart, as pardon of sin; though there may be difference of heat, and crying unto GOD, according to the necessity of the blessing asked in the prayer. Prayer is the creature of the Holy Ghost, every part whereof, we should heartily desire, that he would animate thoroughly, even as the soul does the body.

For the third, with all watchfulness, pursue and press after the things prayed for, by a timely apprehension, fruitful exercise, and utmost improvement of all occasions, ordinances, helps, and heavenly offers, which may any ways concur to the obtaining of them. For instance: you prayest for knowledge: walk then, when you have done, with a constant endeavor, in the strength of this prayer, through all the means, reading, hearing, confer ring, practising, (for even that also is a means to increase knowledge, especially experimental,) for the storing of thy understanding with all sacred illuminations and holy senses of God's saving Word. Let no opportunity pass; be violent in catching all occasions for the hoarding up in thine heart such hidden treasures. "If you criest after knowledge," says Solomon, "and liftest up thy voice for understanding," chap. 2: 3, (there is the prayer): "if you seekest her as silver, and searchest for us, as for hidden treasures, ver. 4, (there is the endeavor): " Then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge

of GOD,” ver. 5, (there is the blessing.) Again, you prayest to be preserved out of ill company, you dost well: but when you have done, dost you make conscience of that counsel of Solomon, Prov. 4: 14, 15, and by the power thereof, oppose the cunning enticements, and cursed importunities of thine old companions and brethren in iniquity “Enter not,” says Solomon, “into the path of the wicked; and go not in the way of wicked men. Avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away.” He that makes prayer the end of prayer, thinking when that holy duty is done, that there is no more to be done, prays to no purpose. There must be good doings, as well as good ordinances. He that does not earnestly afterwards set himself against sins deprecated, and pursue with zeal the good things petitioned, his prayer is not worth a rush.

II. Decline idleness, the very canker of the soul, the devil’s cushion; his tide-time of temptation, wherein he carries with much ease, the current of our corrupt affections, to any cursed sin. And be diligent in some lawful, honest, particular calling; not so much to engross wealth, as for necessary provision for thy family and posterity. And in obedience to that common charge, laid upon the sons of Adam, to the world’s end; “in the sweat of thy face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground.”
1. But ever go about the affairs of thy calling with a heavenly mind, seasoned and sanctified with habitual prayer, ejaculatory elevations, willingness, if God so please, to be dissolved, and to be with CHRIST; pregnant with

heavenly matter and meditations, picked out of the passages of thy present business. For instance; let the husband-man in seed-time think, If I now take not the season, I shall have no harvest, but starve in the winter: so if I gather not grace in this sunshine of the gospel, I shall find nothing but horror upon my bed of death. 2. In all the business of thy personal calling, let thy eye be upon God's glory, as the end of all thy actions, and in them seek and serve that glorious end of God's honor, not so much in procuring thine own, as the good of the church, of thy neighbors, and family. 3. By earthly employments, do not become an earth-worm. In using the world, grow not a worldling, and such an one as finds more sweetness in worldly dealings and profits, than in thy heavenly traffic and treasures.

III. In thy solitary seasons: 1. Single out some special matter to meditate on; both to prevent vain and foolish thoughts, impertinent wanderings, and the trifling away thy precious time; and also to keep the powers of thy soul alive. When can. you be alone, and not have just cause, either to busy thy mind about some lawful affairs of thy calling; or to strive against some corruption, which troubles the peace of thy conscience, or to break out in the praises of GOD, or to employ thy mind on some subject of heavenly meditation, whereof there is so great variety 2. Watch and withstand, with all godly jealousy and care, two dangerous evils: 1st. Thoughts of pleasures from thy youthful sins, which at such times are ready to make re-

entry. And in this point take heed, lest the devil delude thee in the glory of an angel. For in thy solitary musing, you may possibly resume the abominations of thy former life, especially of that sin, which was thy darling pleasure, on purpose to bewail and detest them; and yet, without a vigilant eye, that which was intended for an exercise of repentance, may cursedly end in the ideal re-enjoyment of old filthy pleasures. 2dly, Take heed also at such times of acting any new sins, upon sensual suppositions, and imaginary plots: as of worldliness, speculative wantonness, or dishonoring God's providence by an unnecessary forecasting of fearful accidents. 3. Let not pass such a golden opportunity without some conference with God in secret. Cry out towards heaven for some special graces, by which you may be most enabled to glorify God most, and to keep in thy breast a cheerful and heavenly spirit, as for precious jewels to be purchased with the loss of ten thousand worlds; but not to be parted with for as many worlds as you have hairs upon thy head. Beg with earnestness mortifying grace, and spiritual strength, for the conquering of those unruly passions that most haunt thee. Let a sorrowful survey of all thy sins draw from thee some hearty groan, and fervent ejaculations for mercy and pardon; or a summary view of God's blessings fill thy heart with lowly and thankful thoughts. Thus let some part of thy solitary time be sure to be seasoned with holy musings, and talk with God.

IV. Concerning company, I advise, 1. That you never cast

thyselves into wicked company, upon choice; and abide no longer with them at any time, than you have sound warrant to do. It is not for the honor or comfort of God's children familiarly to converse with graceless men. There is a strange power in ill company, to empoison and pervert even the best dispositions. But the hurt which the Christian does take in this regard, is most from civil men, whited tombs, who being unseasoned with the power of inward sanctification, secretly infuse, if not a notorious infection with some scandalous sin; yet many times a fearful defection from zeal in the ways of God. Throw a blazing firebrand into the snow, and its brightness and heat will be quickly put out. Let a Christian but for a while abandon his communion with God's children, and stay in the company of those who are cold and careless; and he shall, in a very short time, find his zeal to be much cooled, the tenderness of his conscience much qualified with worldly wisdom; much dullness of heart, deadness of spirit, drowsiness, and heartlessness in his affections to holy things; and an universal decay of his graces insensibly to grow upon him. In this respect many Christians do themselves much injury. For they some-times unadvisedly, by reason of kindred, or for old acquaintance, hold too near correspondence with such as are at best only civil men; and they, wanting both heart and skill to uphold any holy conversation, or to afford mutual help, in the feeling parts of sanctification, are occasions to put God's children out of use with the language of Ca-

naan, and to bereave them of much zeal, comfort, feelings of God's favor, boldness in his ways, and cheerfulness in the exercises of religion.

2. In the second place: if you desire to converse with some of thine unconverted kindred, neighbors, and old acquaintance, for their spiritual good, observe these three rules: 1. Let there be good probability of there being more spiritual wisdom and Christian resolution in thee to convert. them, than poison of worldly wisdom in them, to pervert thee. 2. See that thy heart be sincere, and you seek truly their conversion, and not thine own secret satisfaction: for in this point thine own heart will be ready to deceive thee. 3. As physicians of the body arm themselves with strong preservatives, when they visit contagious patients; so be you sure to furnish thyself beforehand with prayer, meditation, the sword of the Spirit, store of persuasive matter, strength of reasons, and unshaken resolutions, to repel all spiritual infection.

3. In the company of true Christians, which you should prize as heaven upon earth, bring, 1. A cheerful heart. Methinks, though you should come amongst the saints with a sad heart, overcast with clouds of heaviness; yet the faces of those, whom hereafter you shall meet in heaven, and there with incomparable joy behold for ever, clothed with glory, should dispel them all. I know them, who, being cast sometimes against their wills among profane company, are quite out of their element all the while;

struck dead in the place, as they say; as solitary as in the silentest desert. But let them come amongst Christians, and they are quite other men, as full of lightsomeness and life, as full of heat and heaven, as if they had the one foot in the porch of paradise already. Sadness is not seasonable, where such precepts as these have place: “Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout’ for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.” 2. A fruitful heart, full as the moon with gracious matter to uphold edifying conference. Being forward and free without any hurtful bashfulness, or vain-glorious aim, both to communicate to others the hidden treasures of heavenly knowledge, and also by moving of questions, and ministering occasion mutually to draw from them the waters of life, for the refreshing and quickening of the deadness and unheavenliness of thine own heart. And here it will be a profitable wisdom, to observe each others several endowments, and with wise insinuations, to provoke them to pour out themselves in those things, wherein they have best experience and most excellency. Some are more skilful in discussing controverted points: others in resolving cases of conscience some in discovering the devil’s depths, and treading the maze of his manifold temptations: others in comforting afflicted spirits, and speaking to the hearts of mourners in Zion. I am persuaded many times, many worthy discourses he buried in the breasts of understanding men, by reason of the sinful silence, and barrenness of those about them. And

there-fore Christians ought to be more forth-putting, active, and fruitful this way.

3. An humble heart, rejoicing to exchange and enjoy heavenly consultations with the poorest and most neglected Christian. If you be haunted with the white devil of spiritual pride, it is likely you wilt be either too profuse, and so engross all the talk; or else too curious, and so say no more than may serve to breed an admiration of thy worth; which is a very sinful and fearful fault. There is no depth of knowledge, no heighth of zeal, but may be enlarged and inflamed by conference with the poorest Christian.

V. But above all, be most busy with thy heart: for it is the root that either poisons or sweetens all the rest. Attend, therefore, amongst others, to these three points of special consequence with all seriousness and zeal.

1. To captivate and conform the thoughts and imaginations of thy heart, to the sovereignty and rules of grace. If thy change in words, actions, and all outward carriage were angelical; yet if thy thoughts were the same as ever, you wouldst still be a limb of SATAN. Purity in the inward parts is the most sound evidence of our interest in CHRIST's saving passion: see Jer. 4: 14, Isa. lv. 7. Now, that you may the better keep the thoughts of thy heart in obedience unto CHRIST, acknowledge, First, the pestilence of that wicked proverb, Thoughts are free. It is true, the invisible projects of the heart he not within the walk

of human justice. But there is an all-seeing eye in heaven, to which the blackest midnight is as the brightest noon-tide. Whereas then the natural man is wont to let his heart run into idle imaginations, without remorse or restraint; do you make thy sanctification sure, by this infallible sign, that you sufferest the consideration of God's all-seeing eye, and check of a tender conscience, to range thy thoughts into order, and to confine and keep them within a holy compass.

Secondly, acknowledge that you must be accountable for every wandering thought, as well as for idle words and wicked actions. Therefore, if you be not exactly vigilant over thy heart, you may justly fear, that, upon the opening of the book of thy conscience, at those two dreadful days, of death, and the last judgment, innumerable armies of exorbitant thoughts, which have lain in ambush as it were, in the secret corners of thy deceitful heart, will charge thee with a far heavier account, than you have seriously thought upon heretofore.

Thirdly, acknowledge that God's glory must as well shine in thy thoughts, in the invisible workings, intentions, and desires of the heart, as in thine outward conversation. As God expects service from his children in words and works; so there is also a thought-service, a thought-worship, as I may call it, which is very precious in his eyes, as springing more immediately from the heart, wherein he principally delights; and because the

secrecy of it is attended with more sincerity. Remember therefore to render with all reverence and zeal unto the Father of spirits, and Lord of thy soul, the daily tribute of thy thought-service, as well as the tongue-service and hand-service. And the rather, because opportunities, abilities, and means may fail for outward performances, but the heart is ever at leisure and liberty to think nobly. No times, no tyrants, no wants or restraint, can hinder it from an invisible fruition of GOD, with thoughts of sweetest rapture and reverence, of love and lowliest adoration; from hating itself in the meritorious blood of the immaculate Lamb, with thoughts of inexplicable peace, joy, and triumph; and from cleaving to the promises of life, and diving into the mystery of grace with purest delight, and victorious faith; from being as a mountain of myrrh and incense, sending up a spiritual sacrifice of praise-full thoughts, infinitely admiring and magnifying the glory and goodness of that merciful hand, which wrote thy name in the book of life, suffered the dearest blood in his Son's heart to "be spilt as water upon the ground, for the washing of thy body and soul from sin; and after a span of time, will set a crown of eternity upon thy head. And, besides God's more special acceptance of this invisible service, it is ordinarily full of more spirituality and life, by reason that it is nearest to the object of adoration. The best man, though he may labor to do his best every way, yet he shall find a difference in his duties and services towards God. His works do not answer with that exactness to his words: his words cannot express the thoughts

of his heart: the thoughts of his heart come infinitely short of the excellency of God. Those streams which are next to the well-head, are purest. The thoughts of a sanctified heart, laying hold upon him, with immediate apprehension, that most amiable, holy, and glorious object, God blessed for ever, give him his due and reverend attributions, with more heartiness, life, and heavenliness, than words or actions are wont; though all a man's best, in thought, word, and deed, falls fearfully short of what we owe and ought to do.

2. Keep a continual and watchful guard over thy heart. It is like a city, liable every moment both to inward commotion and outward assault. The fountain of original impurity, though its main stream be stayed by the sanctifying power of CHRIST's grace; yet it does still less or more bubble up. The world does labor continually with her three great battering engines of pleasure, riches, and honors, to lay it waste. The devil watches every opportunity to hurl in his fiery darts, and cast all into combustion. Precious, therefore, is that precept, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," Prov. 4: 23. That you may do this with more success, First, watch'over the windows of thy soul, the senses. It is incredible what pollution the devil conveys insensibly through these inlets of sin, into their bosoms who are careless this way. To instance in the ear and eye: a tale-bearer tells thee, that such a one said of thee so and so, when in truth, it was neither so nor so. You presently conceivest thoughts of displeasure against

that man, that. never thought thee ill. Here you spillst innocent blood; for thy heart may kill, as well as thy tongue. and hand. It is fit therefore for every honest face to fill itself with frowns of distaste and indignation at the approach of any tale-teller. “As the north wind driveth away rain, so does an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.” Concerning the eye, David’s example may warn the holiest men to the world’s end, to be very watchful with a restless jealousy, over that wandering sense. Secondly, resist and crush every exorbitant thought, which draws to sin, at the very first rising. Say unto thyself, “If I commit this sin, it will cost me more smart, before I can obtain assurance of pardon, than the sensual pleasure is worth: if I never repent, it will be the damnation of my soul.” Thirdly, entertain always with all holy desire, and make much of; all good motions put into thy heart by the blessed Spirit. Feed, enlarge, and improve them to the utmost, with meditation, prayer, and practice. So you shall preserve thy heart in a soft, holy, comfortable temper, which is a singular happiness.

3. Often lift you up thy heart towards heaven. What Christian heart can endure to discontinue its sweet familiarity and humble intercourse with God for one day Let thy broken heart therefore every day, besides ordinary ejaculations, evening and morning, and upon other special occasions, be sure, 1st, To have itself in the depth of God’s mercies in CHRIST, that it may be kept thankful, and inclined to all holy duties. 2dly, To kiss sweetly the

glorified body of our crucified Laid with the lips of affectionate love, (though the distance be great, yet the hand of faith will bring them easily together,) that it may be preserved in peace, purify, and opposition unto sin. 3dly, To cast the eye of hope unto the unutterable excellencies of that immortal crown above, which after this life shall be set upon thy head by the hand of God; a very glimpse whereof is able both to sweeten the basest wrongs from the world and wicked men, and to dispel those mists of fading vanities, which this great dunghill of the world, heated by the fire of in-ordinate lusts, is wont to interpose between the sight of men's souls and the bliss of heaven.

VI. Be very watchful over thy predominant passion; whether it be fear, sorrow, love, or anger. All of them are raging enough; but commonly one rules over all the rest, in the unregenerate man; nay, too often offers to rise in rebellion even against the sanctified soul. Whatsoever it be, 1. In thy private morning sacrifice, be sure to pour forth the deepest groans and strongest cries for mortifying grace against it, and comfortable conquest over it. 2. Cut off all occasions, whatsoever it cost thee, which may any ways kindle it. Withdraw the fuel that ministers food unto that flame, though it shall be as painful unto thee, as the plucking out of the right eye.

VII. Prize, as a most comfortable perfection in Christi-

anity, a right ordering of thy tongue. It is of special importance for preservation both of outward and inward peace. Original corruption has put upon every man's tongue a fiery edge, whereby like a sword, it kills and slays on all sides; wounds the souls of the present; mangles the good names of the absent, and so hases itself in continual bloodshed, (for there is heart-murder, and tongue-murder, as well as hand-murder,) until the attainment of this grace. That it may therefore neither be unseasonably idle, nor sinfully exercised, take notice of, and practice.

I. That much and generally neglected duty of Christian reproof. You shall meet now and then, upon unavoidable necessity, wits men that swear, blaspheme God's name, talk filthily, or rail against good men; besides many other base and profane speeches. In this case wicked men meddle not. They hold it a point of unnecessary preciseness to mar the mirth, by calling sin into question. They are commonly excellent in railing upon a good man in his absence; but they are stark naught in reproving a notorious wretch unto his face. If they open their mouth in this way, it is commonly in form, for some one's sake in the company; who, they know, cannot endure it. But in such cases, the Christian is truly solicitous and zealous, and careful how to frame and hold a serious, wise, and seasonable contradiction to the language of hell. He dares not hold his peace, lest he be guilty, of the parties going on in sin; of betraying God's glory by a cowardly silence;

and of wounding his own conscience. For this kind of reproving then, the Christian is not to be censured. Conscience, charity, and God's commandment call upon him for the performance of this needful duty, whensoever necessity, or a warrantable calling shall have cast him among profane wretches; except they be dogs, or swine. CHRIST himself has commanded, that pearls and holy things shall not be cast away upon such.

The ground of this commandment of CHRIST I take to be twofold: 1. A compassionate care of GOD, even over the lives of his children. Besides the continual guard of the blessed angels, his own all-seeing and all-pitying eye does ever graciously watch over them; and therefore he forbids them to cast themselves into the mouth of a barking dog, or upon the paw of a revengeful lion: that is, he would not have his child to vouchsafe so much as a reproof to any blasphemous wretch, or desperate swaggerer, that would furiously fly in his face for offering him a pearl. 2. An holy jealousy over the glory and majesty of his own blessed word. It is that holy wisdom which issued immediately out of his own infinite understanding. It is far more pure and unspotted than silver tried in a furnace of earth, fined seven-fold. It is a sacred pearl, fashioned by his own almighty hand in the palaces of heaven; and therefore most unworthy to be trodden under foot, or trampled in the mire by any sensual swine. These two reasons of the commandment he in the text, "Give ye not that which is holy unto dogs, &c. lest they

trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.” Whence we have also some light to discern who are dogs, and who are swine.

1. By dogs, we see, are meant obstinate enemies, that maliciously revile the ministry of the word, and the messengers thereof; who not only tread the words of instruction under foot, but turn again, and rend the teachers, and furiously fly in the face of those who fairly tell them of their faults. Consider this and tremble, all ye that are become scornful and furious opposers to the power and purity of the word, and to its faithful ministers. Alas! poor wretches! you cast yourselves desperately into that accursed and horrible condition, that every man is bound in conscience not to afford you so much as an admonition, or reproof, or a caveat to prevent those curses, which are coming upon you. And you willfully draw upon your own heads that most fearful doom from God’s Spirit, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” He that rails against the power of grace, let him continue still a mad dog. He that sets himself maliciously against the ministry of the word; let that man receive no comfort or benefit by the word of life. If he will needs do it, let him roar still, swagger, be drunk, despair, die, And be damned.

2. By swine are meant those scurrilous wretches, who scornfully trample under foot all holy instructions and reproofs. Some of these are swine, as it were, only in

practice. They do not say much, or keep any great grunting against good men; but they feed insatiably, though silently, upon the dross of sensual pleasures. And if at any time a pearl be cast in their way, (I mean, a seasonable reproof,) they trample it in the mire, and, with a brutish baseness, tread it under foot; because indeed they hate to be reformed, and are resolved not to exchange these worldly pleasures for an hundred heavens. Other swine there are, both in practice and profession; who, besides their hating to be reformed, and resolution not to forego their present pleasures, are also possessed with a spirit of scoffing. These are rather wild boars: for with a furious insolence, they provoke and challenge the mighty Lord of heaven, about the truth of his judgments and promises. Let all swinish wretches consider this, and tremble; who, with sinful greediness feed upon earthliness; who willfully wallow in the mud of vanishing pleasures, and will not be washed; who come to, and depart from the house of GOD, with a resolution not to change their old fashions, (say the preacher what he will,) but to live, and end their days in their former courses of profaneness. Cursed also is the condition of all you that are scoffers at godliness and good men. You have wearied yourselves so long in walking and standing in wicked ways, that you are now set down at rest in the chair of scorers. And therefore, all those that stand on the Lord's side are commanded by CHRIST, there to leave you in your damned case, and to disquiet you no further. And what an horrible depth of spiritual misery is

this, that you run furiously towards the pit of hell, and must have no body to stay you; not a man to call and cry unto you, that the fiery lake is a little before you

Though we have thus much light from the natural properties of dogs, and swine to descry them; yet Christians are sore troubled many times, when to speak, and when to hold their peace; when to repute persons, dogs, and swine, when not. And I do not see how any constant rule can be given in this case; it is clothed with such a variety of circumstances. The advice which I would give is this: when a man is perplexed what to do amongst profane company, let him consult with those bosom counsellors, look unto his spiritual wisdom, to his heart, and to his conscience. These must be his guides in these cases: and they are counsellors ever at hand.

1. His spiritual wisdom is to guide him in a right apprehension of circumstances, and to define when he is to interpose, and in what manner. It must tell him secretly, when the cause of GOD, or the innocency of a good man calls specially upon him for an apology. It must

inform him how he must reprove; whether directly and in plain terms, or by intimation, and indirectly; whether personally, or in the general; whether in a fair or milder manner, or with a more bold and resolute spirit; whether in hot blood, as it were, or afterward to take occasion to censure the same sin; whether only by discountenance, or discourse; by a silent disapprobation, (which, I think,

may be sufficient for some men, at some times, in some companies,) or with solemn protestation, and a professed opposition and dislike.

2. Let him also look to his heart, that his reproof spring not from any imperious humor of censuring and meddling with his brethren; from a proud vein of contradicting; out of a stoical sourness, and commanding surliness; from any purpose to disgrace and grieve the party; from pharisaical severity; from a secret desire of purchasing reputation; or from any other by-respect: but from an heart truly humbled with its own infirmities, zealously thankful unto God for preserving him from the like outrage; graciously melted into commiseration of the offender; lifted up in a secret supplication for the pardon of its own sin, success of the reproof, and salvation of the party.

3. His conscience must guide him in the right path, between two extremes, which, in these cases men are apt to incur: I mean, faint-hearted silence, and furious zeal. Men, many times, by reason of unChristian cowardliness, would gladly make all such offenders dogs and swine; that thereby they might challenge the privilege of exemption from the discharge of that Christian duty. Though their ears be filled with the oaths and blasphemies of those that are about them, and railings against good men, and the ways of God; yet they never open their mouth. Oh! these are vile cowards in good causes,

and a kind of traitors to Christianity. By such sinful silence, they labor to purchase a name of no-meddlers in other men's matters; of wiser and more moderate Christians. But let them know, that such no-meddling is a kind of soul-murdering. Such wisdom is not that of the Scripture, but the wiliness of that red dragon, suggested by hell. Some others, it may be, but not near so many, run into the other extreme, and out of a furious zeal, with boisterousness fly in the face of some desperate swaggerer, with an indigested and unseasonable reproof; whereby they both incur the guilt of giving an holy thing unto a dog, and unnecessary danger from the fury of the party. Or else for want of spiritual wisdom, they tender an admonition to some such contemptuous swinish wretch, as will put by the word of truth with a scurrilous jest; or with a dull, and scornful sottishness trample it under foot.

These cautions premised, every Christian ought to address himself with resolution to discharge this duty of reproof, when a just occasion requires it at his hands. For these reasons:

First, In respect to the party offending, a seasonable reproof may, by the blessing of GOD, be an occasion of conversion to the offender. And let him know, that he who a converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." With what eagerness and zeal ought we to stop

the course of a reasonable creature towards the pit of hell
Speak then boldly in the cause of GOD, when you Near-
est thy brother blaspheme his name, jest with his word,
talk filthily, rail against holiness, slander good men;
plead for profane pastimes, for they are so many mortal
stabs to his own poor soul; besides the natural infectious-
ness of such speeches, which may do much mischief to
the standers by. Though thy reproof prevail not at the pre-
sent; yet you knows not what impression it may have af-
terward upon his hard heart, whereby perhaps he may
think upon a new course, and so you be a blessed instru-
ment of saving a soul.

But if it have not so happy a success upon his soul, yet
perhaps you may thereby tame his insolence, and so cool
and confound his swaggering humor, that he will not
glory in his villany. If a profane wretch will needs swear,
and rail against the servants of GOD, yet let him know,
that all the while he fights against GOD, damns his own
soul, and pleases none but devils, drunkards, and devilish
men. If he will needs labor against the ways of GOD, let
him know that his name shall rot after him as vilely as
his his carcass in the grave; and himself burn in hell ev-
erlastingly, if he hold on in that humor without timely
repentance and re-formation.

Secondly, In such cases the Christian must speak in re-
spect of himself. As when the air is empoisoned, men use
some perfume, that so they may avoid the noisomeness

of the smell, and repel the contagion: so when any profane wretch has let fall any rotten speech, the Christian, with a present counter-poison, as it were, of a seasonable reproof, should stop his own apprehension, lest any baser infection insinuate, and stain the soul. Besides silence at such a time would seem to bewray thy cowardliness in the cause of God. For it would seem strange, that You, who makest a show of standing on the Lord's side, should hear the name of God profaned, or the innocence of a good man trampled upon, and yet never open thy mouth. As you therefore desirest to hold it thy crown and honor to be champion unto the mighty Lord of heaven, and the protector of the good names of good men, be ever ready to open thy mouth, when a just apology in any of these respects is needful. Add to this, if thy conscience be enlightened, awake, tender, and rightly informed, it will smite thee after the omission of such a duty; when afterwards you considerest that by thy cowardly silence thy soul is accountable for that sin. As you then wouldst keep all in quiet in thine own bosom, suffer not blasphemies, obscenities, railing, and other such talk to pass uncensured. It was the voice of cruel Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But every true and tender-hearted Christian does grieve to see so many of his brethren stick fast in the teeth of that red dragon, and therefore labors by all means he can to rescue them; to see so many about him run as furiously as they can, to drown themselves in the pit of endless perdition; and therefore, as occasion serves, he calls and cries unto them to stay their

course, before the hellish gulf has shut her mouth upon them.

Thirdly, In respect of those which are present, 1. By thy speaking in such a case, you may lay, as it were, the spirit of profaneness for that time; so that it will not rage in the rest, as otherwise it would. For we may sometimes observe, that a seasonable reproof from a man of understanding, upon a fellow that behaves as though swearing were his portion, and traducing the saints his trade, does so confound the rest of the same crew, that they are quite put out of their humor. 2. You may hereby uphold the weak, that they be not scandalized. 3. You may encourage the hearts of stronger Christians, that they be not cast down with the domineering of profaneness.

Fourthly, In respect of God himself, reprove, 1. That though the days wherein we live, be strangely profane, yet that it may appear, God has some to speak for him: that here and there God has a champion, who, fearless of the face of a man, dares defend his ways, and stand on his side. 2. But above all, let that strict charge from God's own mouth, (Levit. xix. 17, "You shall not hate thy brother in thine heart: you shall in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him,") fright every one of us out of our sinful silence and cowardliness this way.

Upon the whole, as to this point, take notice of a three-fold duty, which lies upon every Christian in his carriage towards men before their faces: 1. Christian admonition:

as, if a brother be overtaken with a fault, or some less offence, we are to admonish him in the spirit of meekness, Gal. 6: 1. 2. Christian reproof: as, if he offend more grievously, we are freely to reprove him; and not to suffer sin to rest upon him, Levit. xix. 17.

3. Christian silence: as, if he be a son of Belial, a dog, or a swine, we are commanded by CHRIST to say nothing, Matt. 7: G. Neither private admonition, nor brotherly reproof is to be vouchsafed to profane ruffians, who would entertain it with cruelty or scurrility.

II. Observe a sanctified silence, from, 1. Rash censuring, which is severely censured by CHRIST himself, and set as a visible brand upon the face of the hypocrite. Leave pharisees and false hearts, to pass rash censures against those who are far better than themselves. A sincere heart is ever most censorious and severe against itself; most searching into, and sensible of its own sins. It knows right well, by experience, what bitterness of spirit springs from the survey of scandalous transgressions in cold blood. It feels deadness of heart, lessening of graces, loss of comforts to ensue upon every relapse. It finds too often, that if it foster in itself any corruption or secret lust, the Lord will not hear its prayers. It is well acquainted with the preciousness of a peaceful conscience, and God's favorable countenance, which it cannot possibly enjoy, if it be in any one sin. This being the experience of an upright heart, it is most eagle-eyed and watchful

over, most strict and severe against its own sins. Which home-employment hinders a man from too much meddling abroad. This world of work within, about his own soul, ties his tongue from being so busy in censuring other men's faults. As therefore you wouldst have a true testimony of taking thine own sins to heart, keep a constant and narrow watch over thy tongue: be very sparing in speaking the evil which you know of others: judge no man rashly.

Yea, but some will say, "Howsoever you put it upon profane men, yet it is well known your sort are the only shrewd censurers, very severe about other men's faults, and still ready, by their peremptory judging, to send all others to hell, save themselves, and those of their own sect." This I grant is many times the profane man's censure of the true Christian, and therein he discovers himself to be a true hypocrite. For he censures sincere-hearted men to be censorious, when himself is the only unconscionable censorer. He reproves God's faithful ones for reproving, when himself full often, amongst his companions, condemns for counterfeits, without all ground or truth, those whom the Lord himself justifies for true-hearted Nathanaels.

To rectify thy judgment in this point of private judging, observe, first, That all judging and censuring is not here condemned. We may judge the tree by its fruit. If we see a fellow incorrigible in his lewd rebellious courses; as

swearing, whoredom, scoffing at religion, and the like, we may (leaving his final doom to the Searcher of all hearts,) judge him, for the present, to be in a most wretched state. But in such cases, besides just cause, be sure of a warrantable calling, conscionable end, and no beam in thine own eye.

Secondly, Let us take notice of some differences between the true professor's and profane men's censuring. It differs in respect, 1, Of the object. The principal object of carnal men's censures is the zealous professor. Dogged they are many times among themselves, but to the people of God they are not only dogs, but enraged devils. The most resolute for God's glory, and in good causes, is ordinarily most railed against and reviled. The foul spirit of good fellowship, as they call it, is still foaming out against them the foulest censures: That they are hypocrites, humorists, pestilent fellows, and all that is nought. David was so charged by Saul and his courtiers, Jeremiah by the profane nobles, CHRIST himself by the Scribes and Pharisees, the primitive Christians by the heathens; and all that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS, must look for the same persecution amongst the men of this world. And in this itching humor of censuring the servants of GOD, the wicked are so eager, that rather than they will want matter, they will snatch it from the envenomed tongue of a tale-bearer; from the slanderous folly of some scurrilous jester, the frothy raving of a greasy, drunken alehouse-haunter; nay, rather than fail, forge it

out of their own profane fancies, and suck it, as they say, out of their own fingers. On the other side, the ordinary object of the Christian's censure is according to CHRIST's rule; those trees which discover them-selves by the fruits which hang upon them in the sight of the sun. And yet that also must be seasoned with charity, discretion, seasonableness, freedom from spleen, humor, and passion. As the hand fasteneth a salve upon any sore part of the body, and then covers it, so they apply a gentle and mild reproof, that it may secretly heal, and the world be never the wiser.

2. In respect of the order. The true Christian ever casts the first stone at himself, begins with himself, searcheth his own heart, censures his own ways, and abandons all his known sins; and then he may with more success censure others. But those who hate to be re-formed, begin with others, are most prying into other men's carriages, perusing other men's lives, but have never any leisure to look into their own hearts.

3. In respect of the manner. Pharisees are wont peremptorily to pass their censures upon the more righteous than themselves, with pride, scornfulness, and insultation; but the censures of Christians are mingled with much mercifulness, pity, and love.

4. In respect of truth. Profane men's censures of God's servants are many times, not only groundless and false, but also absurd, without any shadow of likelihood. The

enemies to CHRIST's ministry censured him as having a devil. Elijah was accounted a troubler of Israel; who was in truth, the very chariots and horsemen thereof. The princes suggested to the king, that Jeremiah was a traitor to the state; from which he was so far, that he desired his head to be waters, and his eyes springs of tears, that he might weep day and night for the desolations of it. Proportionable for monstrosity of falsehood, are many censures passed upon professors at this day. On the other side, God's people are very careful and tender what censures they pass upon others. They conceive and speak the best of every one, until his open fruits clearly convince the contrary. They are so far from violent wresting of men's words, or behavior to the worst sense, that if matters be but probable, they are ever carried the more charitable way. They are so far from censuring others without truth and proof, (which is the ordinary practice of most men) that they never speak the ill they certainly know by their brethren, but with fearfulness, and some kind of enforcement.

Secondly, be silent from slandering, and backbiting. Here I will say nothing of the grosser sorts of slander, because of them, God's children are more easily sensible. But let me a little advise and awaken thee to further inspection of the present point; lest sometimes even in telling the truth, you be intangled in the briars of this base sin, and justly incur the fault of a false accuser; which

you may many ways. 1. By discovering secret infirmities, which love, that covereth a multitude of sins, would have concealed. 2. By drawing out of other men's words, actions, and behaviors, aims, and intentions, which the author never dreamed of; and by fathering upon them such senses, as an impartial expositor could never possibly extract. It is the easiest thing of a thousand, to spoil the glory of the most beautiful actions with surmises of by-ends. For a man's own pride and that of the devil himself, are ready midwives at such monstrous conceptions. 3. By adding unto the truth, or detracting from it, or intermixing false, adulterate glosses. 4. By relating all the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth: but either with a spiteful heart; or in a scornful, and insulting manner; without any warrantable calling thereunto.

Here therefore it will be seasonable, for help against this more plausible, but pestilent kind of slandering, to tell you, that relating the evil that is true of another, in his absence, does brand you with the guilt of back-biters, save in such cases as these:

1. Of good to the party absent. For instance: you informest thy friend of a third man; telling him, that he begins to break out into bad courses, and so proceedest to a more particular discovery of his carriage: but all this purposely for the benefit of the party. And therefore you entreatest thy present friend, that he would improve the utmost of that power which he has, for his amendment.

2. Of expedience for him that heareth: when he is in danger of injury from the party spoken of. For instance: you may lawfully lay out a counterfeit in his colours, for prevention of the mischief, which might ensue, if his character were concealed.

3. Of necessity for him which speaketh: that he may be preserved from guilt, which by saying nothing, he should bring upon himself. For instance: there comes to thy notice some notorious villain, which concealment might animate to further excess; but seasonable advertisement given to authority, as to a magistrate, minister, tutor, father, master, or governor of a family, might be a means to stay the torrent. In this case you have a calling to reveal, inform, and implore superior assistance. And therefore those of the house of Chloe did well to certify Paul, of the disorders amongst the Corinthians: and Paul's sister's son, to acquaint the chief captain, with that devilish plot against Paul. Otherwise, both you and they, by cowardly silence might incur guilt even for other men's sins so unhappily concealed.

4. Fourthly, when a seasonable, warrantable occasion is given thereby, of performing some Christian duty, as,

1. Of instruction, and forewarning others. You have a friend, whom you seest, and fearest is entering a licentious course; whereupon you tellest him, that such and such a man, from contempt of the word, profanation of the sabbath,. disobedience to parents, fell into a knot of

lewd companions, then to gaming, at last, to the gallows. And therefore you advisest him to take heed in time.

2. Of praising God for the rooting out of some implacable persecutor. Upon which occasion thou discoverest unto thy friend many passages and plots of his cruelty and hate against the kingdom of CHRIST. But in such cases look unto thy heart with extraordinary watchfulness, that you do it simply and sincerely; out of zeal to the glory of GOD, prosperity of the gospel, and peace of the church: otherwise, instead of a Christian duty, it will prove a cursed cruelty.

3. Of prayer. You art acquainted with the secret plots of some tyrant against the people of God; where-upon you unmaskest his malice amongst thy Christian friends, to the end that they may contribute their prayers for the confusion of all the devices of hell. Tears, patience, and prayers, were ever the defensive weapons of God's people. Or thus: you observe one to have continued long a professor, but now unhappily he begins to grow negligent, to suffer immoderate employment, and entanglement in the world, to waste his heavenly-mindedness; so that in all likelihood God will shortly give him over unto some scandalous fall, as a punishment of his back-sliding: whereupon you discoverest unto thy Christian friends his declining state, only that they may join with thee in prayer, that the Lord would be pleased to stay him, and re-establish him in his first love.

4. Of vindicating the power and truth of religion. Thus, you art in company, where you hearest a mere civil man, or formal professor at the best, of whom you thyself can aver out of thy certain particular knowledge, that he is utterly unacquainted with the mystery of godliness; I say, you hearest such a man commended for his religion, and fear of God; which commendation, if he carry away without contradiction, the rest of the company may be very eager to follow such a precedent. Now in this case, it may concern thee, but with as much wisdom, discretion, and charity as you can possibly use, to disrobe such a person of the reputation of that holiness which he never had; lest both the by-standers be encouraged to rest short of a title to heaven, and the power of Christianity be disparaged.

III. Pray for, and practice an holy dexterity, to divert from wicked or worldly talk, to more heavenly conversation. Methinks, it is a great pity, that professors should ever meet without some discourse of their meeting in heaven, or of the blessed ways that lead thereunto. Yet many times, worldly matters, speaking of others, or some more remarkable accidents and affairs abroad, speculative curiosities, ceremony, or other impertinencies, take up even from God's children, too much of many golden seasons, which might preciousely serve, by their mutual diving into the great mystery of godliness, and ways of Christianity, to increase amongst them spiritual warmth, and

resolution against all oppositions, and to build up one another in their most holy faith, acquaintance with temptations, comfortable walking with God. To confront this common mischief, come unto them prepared, as I advised before. But if the company be contrarily minded, and unaccustomed to the language of Canaan, interpose all thy wisdom, courage, authority, and eloquence, to draw them from their idle talk; and by a wise, plausible diversion, and modestly over-ruling transition, carry the current of their discourse all you can towards some good and spiritual end.

1. To which end, observe, and apprehend all opportunities and occurrences which may minister matter of digression into Divine discourse; and acquaint thyself with the art of abstracting sacred instructions from the book of the creatures and businesses in hand. It was the practice of our blessed Savior. Upon mention of bread, Matth. 16: he pressed upon his disciples to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees. • When he observed (John 6:) a number of people throng about him for miraculous bread, he digressed into a most heavenly discourse of the food of life. Upon occasion of drink being denied him by the Samaritan woman, (John 4:) he labored to allure her to the well-head of everlasting happiness,

2. Have ever in readiness some common heads of quickening motives to mind heavenly things: as the miserable condition of our natural state, the vanity and vexations of

all earthly things, the everlastingness of our state in another world, the sudden execution of God's fierce wrath upon some notorious ones, even in this life; especially those which are freshest in memory; the terrors of death, the dreadfulness of that last and great day drawing on apace. The mention of these things many times will strike full cold to the hearts of the most swaggering and sensual Belshazzars, and may, by God's blessing, prepare and soften them for remorse, and more heavenly impressions.

3. But, above all, get into thine own heart an habit of heavenly-mindedness, by much exercise, intercourse, and acquaintance with GOD, in pouring out thy soul before him, in renewing thy peace, and comfortable access unto him upon every check of conscience, in contemplation of the inexplicable sweetness, glory, and eternity of those mansions above; in diving into the secrets of his kingdom, by the help of humbleness and godly fear; by private employment of thy soul in solemn reflections; recounting with what variety of trains it was detained in the state of darkness; what delays and assaults it met with in its way to light; what terrors it passed through in the pangs of its new birth; the temptations incident to its infancy in grace, progress and growth in several graces, and the whole body of Christianity; relapses, desertions, their discoveries, recoveries, with all the means and circumstances: in a word, by a punctual observing how God deals with it every day, be, I say, thus blessedly busied at

home in thine own heart, and you shall find thyself more plentiful in holy discourse when you eomest abroad.

We are most apt to pour out ourselves in public according to our private contemplations. The conferences of free and unreserved spirits are ordinarily nothing else but the clothing of their ordinary heart-secrets with familiar forms of speech. Men, for the most part, speak most, and most willingly of those things they mind most. I advise thus in this point, that you may be habituated and encouraged in the art and exercise of putting forward good talk; or of diverting and drawing towards better, in case of the contrary. Otherwise, you shall never be able to hold out with constancy and courage, to cross many times the general mirth of the company, to put worldly wise men. out of their clement of earthly talk, to draw worldlings to hear of heavenly things.

VIII. Watch narrowly, with the eye of a tender con' science, and conduct with spiritual prudence, every action you undertakest, whether natural or civil, of mercy or of religion. To which particulars, before I descend, let me premise this principle concerning actions in general. In every one of thine actions, look that every concurrent be justifiable,.. that every ingredient be gracious. For instance

1. It must be good in its own nature, and warrantable out of the Word; by which all things must be sanctified unto thee; as a good servant will venture upon nothing but

what he knows will please his master. Otherwise, let the person be never so pleasing unto GOD, his intention never so good, his heart never so zealous, the means; circumstances,- and end never so excellent, yet all is nought.

2. The object, about which the action is exercised, must be qualified according to the rules of religion. Alms-deeds are acceptable sacrifices unto God: but, amongst other cautions, the parties that are to be made partakers thereof are to be singled out with discretion. 1. The true wants of a Christian should, in the first place, draw bounty from a truly charitable heart; according to that, Gal. 5: 10, "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." 2. In the next place, the lame, the blind, the sick, the aged, or any that God has made poor. 3. Any whosoever, in a case of true necessity, whatsoever the party has been before. But now, if you may choice of a sturdy beggar, an idle rogue, the shame and plague of this noble kingdom; you clost not only deprive thyself of the comfort of a charitable deed; but encouragest an execrable irreligious paganism iii such lazy drones, unprofitable burdens of the earth, and intolerable caterpillars of the common-wealth.

3. You must- also look unto the matter. For instance, the matter of thy bounty must be thine own goods, got law-

fully; otherwise it will prove, in respect of Divine allowance, but an abominable sacrifice.

4. The person must be acceptable unto God; otherwise his best deeds are but beautiful abominations. Services most sacred in their own nature, as prayer, hearing the Word, receiving the sacrament, are, from the altar of his unsanctified heart, but as the oaring of swine's blood. If you be not justified by faith, and accepted through CHRIST, all thy actions, natural, civil, religious, whatsoever is within thee, or without thee,—the use of the creatures, all thy courses and ways,—are turned into sins and pollutions.

5. The heart must, be sincere, else, even the noblest duties of religion are nothing. The Israelites' humiliation, seeking - GOD, returning, and inquiring early after him, were all but temporary and unsound, because their heart was not upright. "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 but flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him," Psal. lxxviii.

6. The means must be good, otherwise, be the end never so excellent,—let there be never so exact concurrence of all other causes,—yet the glory of the action is quite darkened to the man that employs any wicked means for

the achievement. Suppose that by a he thou.couldst save -a man's life, his soul, the souls of all the men upon the earth,—nay, win thereby unto God as much glory as accrues unto him by all creatures; yet for all this, on thy part, all were naught. For it is a sacred principle, sealed by truth itself, We must do no ill that good may come.

7. The circumstances must be seasonable. For in-stance: Private prayer is a precious service; but let it be seasonable for the circumstance of place, or else it may lose its sweet-smelling savour in the nostrils of God. The closet, or some retired place, is fit for this exercise; which the more secret, the more sincere. Meditation upon Divine mysteries is an excellent exercise, so it be confined to a fit time; but in the fervour of the preacher's pouring out his soul for us in prayer, it is sinful, because unseasonable. Calling to mind special passages formerly heard, or read, to press them with more life and power upon the conscience, is a right needful duty; but so to do at a sermon, or when we ought to bend our best attention to the present, is but one of SATAN's devices in the glory of an angel, to rob us of the comfort of the ordinance in hand.

8. The end also must be answerable in goodness; otherwise, let the whole affair be carried never so fairly in the eyes of men, yet with God it is no better than the cutting of a dog's neck. Jehu did noble service, by his resolute rooting out that bloody and idolatrous house of Ahab: and yet, for all this, all his outward glorious actions were

to God but as the killing of a man; because his eye was not upon the right end, God's glory. He principally aimed at the secure settling of the crown upon his own head, by an utter extinguishment of the king's family. If his aim had been right, his heart would have been as well set against the golden calves in Dan and Bethel, as his hand and sword against the idolatrous house of Baal.

Now I come to some particulars; and

I. First, Concerning visits. Ever before you go out of thy doors, upon any occasion, weigh well in the balance of holy wisdom, all circumstances, company, probability of all events and consequents on both sides; of staying at home, or going abroad; visiting this or that friend; undertaking that or the other business; and ever resolve that way which, in all likelihood, will bring most glory unto GOD, good unto others, and comfort unto thine own conscience. Let worldlings waste their time in those impertinent visits which have no other motive but a desire to be rid of time; no issue but temptation, and greater disability to good. But let every wisely-resolute Christian disdain to step over his threshold without a warrantable calling; aim at some probable good to come; honor to GOD, good unto our brethren; discharge of some duty of our calling, performance of Christian offices, of charity, humanity, mutual comforting, confirming, refreshing, and building up one another in our most holy faith. Otherwise he shall be in great danger of returning home far

worse than when he went out; laden both with more personal guilt and accessariness to others' sins; bleeding with some fresh bruise of conscience; failing in some Christian duties; grown into a further estrangement from God; or deeper sunk into some sensual conformities with this world.

Some actions, I confess, in their own nature are indifferent; but when clothed with circumstances, are not so; but necessarily become morally good, or evil, to the doer. And therefore the assertion of Catarinus, in the council of Trent, was consonant to Scripture. "Every particular action (said he,) is good or evil; neither is there to be found any one indifferent." (He meant in the actual existence; in the general there may.) It is so also in the present point of visiting.

Although the apostle, 1 Con 10: 27, in these words, "And ye be disposed to go," seems to intimate that it is not absolutely unlawful for a Christian, especially if invited, to visit an irreligious man; yet let none, who desires to preserve peace in his own bosom, presume hereupon to plunge himself into any unwarrantable engagements with worldly men. If any of God's children, therefore, at any time, be disposed to take any allowance from this place, to invite or visit enemies to the purity of religion, or power of godliness; let him cast his eye also upon those cases and cautions which may make it comfortable. They are such as these: 1. Their salvation. 2. Thy own

safety.

1. For the first, be sure to propose their spiritual good as at least thy principal end. But, unless we stand stoutly upon our guard, we are far likelier to be perverted by them, than they to be converted by us. And therefore, at such times, it concerns us much to collect all the powers of our souls, with special address and resolution, to vindicate, all we can, the truth and servants of God from all censure. Let us labor to bring as much wisdom and courage to confront and countermine, as the devil's proctors cunning and malice to undermine the kingdom of CHRIST. It is laudable for the physicians of the body to visit sometimes such patients as are infected with contagious diseases; if they arm themselves with preservatives, to prevent and repel the noisomeness of the air and noxious vapors. So it may not prove unseasonable for spiritual physicians to be drawn some-times, out of a desire of doing good, into the company of those who are over-run with the leprosy of sin; if they be fore-armed with prayer, premeditation, and watchfulness, to preserve their own souls from spiritual infection.

2. Secondly, as to thine own safety, see that thy heart be not conscious of slavish distrust, false fears, inattention to God's providence, reliance upon the arm of flesh; but that it approve, upon good ground, the present occasion, whether of invitation or visitation, as a means offered by God to mitigate the malice, and mollify the hearts of

those who might do thee a mischief. God's children should not, out of an austere retiredness, enrage unnecessarily the too much already alienated affections of the contrarily-minded; but so far as they may, without

a wound of conscience, or imputation of spiritual cowardliness, observe them with such common offices of humanity as may keep them, if not hearty friends, yet at least moderate enemies. But at such times, and in such company, you wilt have need to put on a great deal of courage and patience, wisdom and watchfulness; and warily decline two obvious errors and dangerous extremes, furious zeal, and faint-hearted silence.

3. Discover not such extreme weakness and baseness of mind, as to suffer the eye of thine heavenly spirit to be any whit dazzled with the glistening of outward glory, or to hunt, with fawning terror, the transitory favor of worldly greatness.

4. When you visitest others, or thyself invitest them, take notice before-hand, with as punctual survey as you can, of their humors, dispositions, opinions, and behaviors, and thereupon prepare convenient and seasonable matter, whereby you may apply thyself with all meekness of wisdom and patient discretion, to insinuate, argue, answer, reprove, reply, and so demean thyself in thy whole discourse, that neithe* the glory of GOD, the reputation of Christianity, or thine own conscience, may receive any wound. Would Christians hold this course, they would at

such times not so often depart with spiritual discontent, and so smitten with a consciousness of their silence, omissions, cowardliness, and unprofitableness in company.

II. Concerning natural actions, as eating, drinking, sleeping, I shall not say much. For were it not that, through the depravity of nature, we infatuate our reason with sensuality and wilful blindness, every man might be a rule unto himself this way. Hence that proverb, "Every man is either a fool or a physician." Either he has learned by experience, what seasons and proportions of such natural helps may be fittest for his constitution, or else he is most unworthy of that understanding soul which he bears in his bosom.

Concerning sleep also I have little to say: no certain measure can be prescribed. Only let Inc counsel Christians to take notice, that they may surfeit and sin in sleeping, as well as in eating and drinking. That it ought only, as other of God's good creatures, to serve the strengthening and refreshing of our bodies; and therefore they should beware, lest the great devourer of time bereave them of that flower and first fruits of the day; I mean, many golden hours in the morning; fittest for conversing with GOD, for examining our spiritual state, for offering up an acceptable sacrifice of prayer and praise, buckling fast unto us the Christian armor, and preparing to hold a

blessed communion with his holy Majesty all the day after. And let them often remember, when they see the sun up before them, that saying of St. Austin, “It is an uncomely thing for a Christian to have the sun-beams finding him in bed; and if the sun could speak, (says he,) it might say, I have labored more than You, yesterday, and yet I am risen, and you art still at rest.”

For conclusion, let me advise with as great earnestness as I can possibly all God’s children, that (as they prefer infinitely a pure heart, and that invaluable jewel, a peaceful conscience, before a world of gold,) they would watch over themselves with singular care in the use and enjoyment of things lawful. “For more (says a worthy divine,) perish by lawful things, than by unlawful courses.” Soft sands swallow up more ships than hard rocks split, Christians are in more danger of being spiritually undone by want of moderation in lawful things, than by the gross assault of foul sins.

III. Now concerning civil affairs, and dealings in the world, that you may keep thine heart and hands untainted,

1. Ever in all bargains, contracts, dealings, intercourse of any kind with others, follow that royal principle, Do as you wouldst be done by. Put thyself into the place of the party with whom you art to deal. Weigh well all the circumstances of the whole business; and then, returning to thyself, deal out to him that measure, in every particular,

which you wouldst be willing, upon good ground, to receive at the hands of another, if you went in his case. This is the sum of the law and the prophets for serving our brethren in love, “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.”

2. Let thy desire and delight never be fixed upon any earthly thing. To instance: Of all the civil affairs subject to human deliberation, there is none more important, or of greater consequence, either for extreme vexation, or ordinary contentment, than marriage. A word or two therefore, first, of convenient entrance into,—and, secondly, comfortable enjoyment of that honorable state.

For the first, 1. Let thy choice be in the Lord, according to St. Paul’s rule, Let piety be the first mover of thine affection, and then consider person, portion, and outward things only in a second place. The fear of GOD, as it is generally the foundation of human felicity, so must it especially be counted the ground of all comfort which man and wife desire to find in each other. There was never any gold or beauty which tied comfortably any marriage-knot. It is only the golden link of Christianity which has power to make so dear a bond lovely and everlasting; which can season and strengthen that inseparable society with true sweetness and immortality.

2. Warm thine heart with more special repose upon the party, as one with whom you can comfortably consort.

For the husband, all concurrents considered, ought to settle his affections upon his wife as the fittest that the world could have afforded him: and the wife should rest her heart upon her husband as the meetest for her that could have been found under the sun. By a constant intercourse of which mutual content in each other, the husband will be to the wife as “a covering of her eyes,” that she lift them not up upon any man; and the wife to the husband “the pleasure of his eyes,” that he may still look upon her with sober and singular delight.

Otherwise they will find but cold comfort in that commandment, Prov. 5: 18, 19, “Rejoice with the wife of thy youth: let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe and be you ravished always with her love.” without this mutual complacency, each in the other, I doubt whether I should encourage any to proceed.

3. In going about such an important business, apply to the throne of grace with extraordinary importunity and fervency of prayer. Wrestle with God in days of more secret and solemn humiliation for a blessing; and with sincerity heartily desire him, whatsoever thy expectations may be, yet if it be not to his glory, to dash it quite. A good wife is a more immediate gift of God than any other temporal blessing. “House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; but a prudent wife is from the Lord.” And therefore such a rare and precious jewel is to be sought for at God’s mercy-seat with extra-ordinary importunity.

And methinks, whatever good thing is procured at God's hand by prayer should bring with it, even in our sense and thankful acknowledgment, a thousand times more sweetness than that which is cast upon us by God's ordinary providence.

GENERAL DIRECTIONS FOR A COMFORTABLE WALKING WITH GOD.

GENESIS 6:8, 9

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked..with God.

IN this dreadful story of the old world's degeneration and destruction, here stands an illustrious star, shining, fair in the darkest midnight of SATAN's universal reign; I mean Noah, a preacher of righteousness, to whose family alone the true worship of God was confined, when all the world besides lay drowned in idolatry and paganism, ready to be swallowed up in an universal grave of waters.

Now in this story of Noah, so highly honored with freedom from the sinful contagion of those desperate times, and happily exempted from the judgment upon the earth, I consider,

First, The cause of such a singular, blessed preservation; which was the free grace and favor of God: “but ~i6ah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,” ver. 8.

Secondly, the renown of Noah’s name: in that he stands here as the father of the new world: “These arc the generations of Noah,” ver. 9.

Thirdly. The description, 1. Of Noah’s personal goodness: 2. Of his preservation: 3. Of his posterity.

The description of his personal goodness stands in the end of verse 9, “Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God.” Where we find him honored with three noble attributes, which make up the character of a complete Christian. 1. Honesty. 2. Uprightness. 3. Piety. And they receive much lustre from a circumstance of time: “in his generations:” which were many and mainly corrupt.

Without, any further unfolding of my text, I collect from the first point, (wherein I find God’s free grace to be the cause of Noah’s preservation,) that the free grace and favor of God is the first mover and fountain of all our good. All praise then is due unto Jehovah, the author of all our good, the fountain of all our bliss, the well-spring of life, whereby we live, and move, and have our being; our natural being, the being of our outward state; our gracious being, the everlastingness of our glorious state. Were the

holiest heart upon earth enlarged to the vast comprehension of this great world's wideness; nay, made capable of all the glorious hallelujahs offered to Jehovah, both by all the militant and triumphant church; yet would it come infinitely short of sufficiently magnifying, admiring, and adoring the inexplicable mystery, and bottomless depth of this free mercy of GOD, the fountain and first mover of all our good! We may, and are bound to bless GOD, for all the means, instruments, and second causes, whereby it pleases him to convey good things unto us: but we must rest principally at the well-head of all our welfare, Jehovah, blessed for ever. We receive a great deal of comfort and refreshment from the moon and stars; but we must chiefly thank the sun: from the great rivers also; but, the main sea is the fountain. Angels, ministers, and men may pleasure us; but Jehovah is the principal. Let us then imitate those lights of heaven, and rivers of the earth; do all the good we can with those good things God has given us by his instruments; and then return all the praise unto the Sun of Righteousness, and Sea of our salvation.

From the second point in these words, "These are the generations of Noah; (whereas the memorial of all the families upon earth besides, lay buried in the gulf of everlasting oblivion, as their bodies in the universal grave of waters; the family of Noah is not only preserved; but his generations registered in the book of GOD, and conveyed along towards the Lord JESUS, as his progenitors,

and precedent royal line.) I observe, that personal goodness is a good means to bring safety, honor, and many comfortable blessings upon posterity. Because,

1. Parents, professing religion in truth, make conscience of praying for their children before they have them, as did Isaac and Hannah: when they are quick in the womb, as did Rebeckah: when they are born, as did Zachariah: in the whole course of their life, as did Job: at their death, as did Isaac. And prayers, we know, are for the procuring of all favors at the hands of GOD, either for ourselves, or others, the most sovereign means we can possibly use.

2. Godly parents do infinitely more desire to see the true fear of God planted in their children's hearts, than the diadem of the whole earth set upon their heads. And therefore their principal care is, by a good example, religious education, daily instruction, loving admonitions, seasonable reproofs, restraint from wicked company, and by all the best means, and utmost endeavors, to leave them gracious, when they go out of this world. And "Godliness, (says Paul,) has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It gives right and full value to all the true honor, blessings, and comforts, which are to be had' in heaven or in earth.

We have, Thirdly, a description of Noah's spiritual state, consisting of, 1. His justness. 2. Sincerity, 3. Piety.

I collect from the first branch of his character, that every

truly religious man, is also a just and true-dealing man. From the second, that sincerity is the sinew and touchstone of true Christianity. But these two I have so often pressed in the course of my ministry, that I will pass by them at this time; only making the following observation. Look! what kind of honesty to men that is, which is not accompanied with religion towards God; the same is that religion towards GOD, which is not attended with honesty to men. Dishonest religion, irreligious honesty, insincere religion and honesty, are all out of the right path. If you have respect only to the commandments of the first table, and outward performance of religious services; but neglect the duties of the second, you art but a pharisee and formal professor. If you deal justly with thy neighbor, and yet be a stranger to the mystery of godliness, you art but a mere civil man. If you put on an outward face only of conformity to both, and yet be true-hearted to neither, you art but a gross hypocrite. Bear thyself holily towards GOD, honestly towards man, and true-heartedly towards both, or you art no body in CHRIST's kingdom; but still in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. Put on righteousness and true holiness, in this life, or you shall never put on a crown of glory in the life to come.

Again, that which adds lustre to Noah's character is the circumstance of time, that is, "in his generations," which were many, and mainly corrupt. Noah stood out, and cleaved unto God through so many ages; and against so

wicked a world: so likewise the true Christian must stand at staves' end with the corruptions of the time. Let every one, who has given his name to CHRIST, ever count it his crown and comfort, to hold a strong and unconquerable counter-motion to the courses of the world. Let him still discover the true nobleness of his Christian spirit, and of a mind spiritually generous, by gathering vigor, growing invincible, from the very oppositions of the wicked, and villanies of the time. It was the saying of a moral heathen, "That to do well, where was no danger, was a common thing; but to do well where was both peril and opposition, was the peculiar office of a man of virtue:" much more, say I, of a man of God.

"And Noah walked with God." Walking with God is the flower of all Noah's excellencies. It is the crown of the Christian's character, and the duty and property of every true Christian. By walking with GOD, I mean, a sincere endeavor to dispose all our thoughts, words, and deeds; our whole conversation, in reverence and fear, with humility and singleness of heart, as in the sight of an invisible GOD, under the perpetual presence of his all-seeing, glorious eye; and by consequence, to enjoy by faith, an unutterable sweet communion and humble familiarity with his holy Majesty; in a word, to live in heaven upon earth. God's covenant with Abraham, and in him, with all the faithful unto the world's end, requires this. The practice and protestations of the servants of God set a seal unto it. Enoch's walking with God was an happy

preparative to his translation to glory. “The Lord before whom I walk,” (says Abraham,) will do thus and thus. “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living,” says David. “O Lord God of Israel,” says Solomon, “there is no God like thee in the heaven, or in the earth; which keepest covenant, and showest mercy unto thy servants, - that walk before thee with all their hearts.” “I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart,” says Hezekiah. “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men,” says Paul: which sounds the same way. “Let their money perish with them, who esteem all the gold in the world worth one day’s society with JESUS CHRIST and his Holy Spirit,” said that noble Marquis of Vico, well experienced in an heavenly conversing with God.

And it must needs be so: for 1. Howsoever natural men do not dare to draw near to that GOD, who to them is “a consuming fire;” yet all those, who have truly tasted how gracious and glorious he is, find their hearts, out of a secret sense of God’s love unto them first, in-flamed with infinite desire to live under the influence of his pleased countenance, to enjoy his holy majesty with constant peace, and an humble spiritual access to and acquaintance with him continually. The true Christian’s spirit of prayer, exercise of repentance, temptations, and troubles from SATAN; pressures from the world, faintness of faith, want of spiritual strength, assault of some special sin, sweetness of meditation, daily favors showered

down' upon him without number, and above measure; fore-thought of the great and last account, motions of the blessed Spirit; but above all, the inexplicable blessedness, goodness, and excellency of that highest majesty, drives him to his God many times a day.

2. All God's love unto us; his loving-kindnesses, protections, preservations, bounty, patience, Divine illuminations, spiritual blessings: in a word, every link of that golden chain of mercy, grace, and glory, far thicker set with blessings in all kinds, than the heaven with stars, should be so many strong chains, to draw our hearts to delight in him, and with an humble familiarity to converse with his Holy Majesty. Oh! then, let us infinitely love, and learn exactly the heavenly art of "walking with God!" For a more comfortable guiding us wherein, give me leave to premise these quickening preparatives.

I. Look that you live not in any known sin, in thine heart, life, or calling. For if so, you art so far from any possibility of walking with GOD, that you wearest the devil's brand, and art most certainly one of his. If SATAN keep possession, but by one reigning sin, it will be thine everlasting ruin. You shall then be so far from ever enjoying any holy acquaintance with GOD, that you shall be destroyed body and soul for ever. One breach in the walls of a city, exposeth it to the surprise of an enemy. One leak in a ship neglected will sink it at length into the bottom of the sea. The stab of a pen-knife to the heart will

as well slay a man, as all the daggers that killed Cesar in the senate-house.

And because the bosom-sin is SATAN's strongest hold, his tower of greatest confidence and security, and most powerful to keep a man's heart from all holy acquaintance with God; I will, in a few words, labor to enlighten and disentangle any one, who unfeignedly desires an utter divorce from this bosom-devil, by telling him first, what it is: secondly, what is his: thirdly, how he may be deceived about it.

First, As in every man there is one humor predominant; so also one work of darkness. And it is that which his corrupt and original crookedness singles out to feed upon with greatest sweetness. Afterward, by custom, it grows so powerful, that it draws unto it the heat of his desires, and strongest workings of his heart; and at the height, by an irresistible tyranny, it makes all occasions and occurrences, religion, conscience, credit with the world, body, soul, and outward state, service-able and contributory unto it, as to the devil's viceroy, domineering In the wasted conscience.

Secondly, You may discover what thine is by such marks as these: 1. It is that which thy truest friends, thine own conscience and the finger of God in the ministry, many times meets with, and checks thee for. 2. It is that, which if it break into act, thine enemies most eagerly observe, and object, as matter of thy greatest disgrace..3. It is that,

which you art most loath to leave, art oftenest tempted unto, have least power to resist, and which most hinders the resignation of thy soul and body, heartily and unre-servedly to God. 4. It is that, which God most frequently corrects in thee, even in the acknowledgment of thy self-accusing heart. It may be, at several times you have been afflicted with some heavy cross, loss of a child, bodily pain, trouble Qf mind: now in all these, upon the first smarting apprehension, thy conscience, if any whit awakened, of its own accord, seizes upon that sin we now seek for, as the principal Achan and author of all thy misery. 5. It is that which you loathest to acknowledge. And therefore you beatest thy brains to devise evasions, excuses, extenuations, whole cart-loads of fig-leaves with which to colour and cloak this foul fiend. 6. Thoughts, plots, and projects about it, ordinarily seize upon thine heart, at thy very first waking; if they have not broken off thy sleep, and troubled thee in thy dreams. 7. In the darkness of the night, if you art suddenly awakened with some dreadful thunder, lightening, or terrible tempest, (if thine heart be not altogether hardened,) the guilt and accusations of thy beloved sin is wont to come into thy mind in the first place, and with greatest terror.

Thirdly, A man may be deceived in conceiving that he is quite delivered from his bosom-sin, and yet it may be but a mere exchange, or some other mistake. This gross, affected self-imposture, may be seen in such cases as these: 1. He may change the outward form of it. For instance;

whereas the same sin of covetousness does express itself by usury, bribery, crushing the poor of the same trade, over-reaching, all manner of doing wrong, all kinds of oppression; he may insensibly glide out of one gulf, into another. He may fall from one of these, being more notorious to some other of them less observed, and not so odious in the world, and yet still abide in the "chambers of death." The foul sin of uncleanness shows itself by fornication, adultery, self-pollution, brutish and immoderate abuse of marriage. Now, he may pass from one of these pollutions to some other of them, not affrighting the conscience with such horror, and yet still he in the damnable snares of lust. 2. He may refrain from the outward acts of such hateful villanies; and yet his inward parts be still hankering after them. He may forbear the external acts of uncleanness; and yet he in speculative wantonness. 3. Nay, he may change the kind of his bosom sin, and yet it is but the exchange of one foul

fiend for another. For instance: wantonness may be his sweet sin in youth; worldliness in old age: revelling in his younger years; downright drunkenness in his declining time: prodigality may sway in some part of his life; pinching in some other: furious zeal for one while; profane irreligiousness for another. 4. When the feebleness of old age has wasted the vigor of his mind, and the boisterous heat of his affections, his darling sin may bid him adieu, without any penitent discharge; and he may say unto it, I have no more pleasure in thee. Whereupon he

may conclude a final conquest over it; a secure deliverance from the guilt and curse of it. 5. He may please himself with forced cessation from it, when there is no want of good-will, as they say; but only of matter, means, or opportunity. 6. He may, for a time, pull his neck out of this strongest yoke of SATAN, out of a slavish fear of hell; but the unclean spirit returns, and rules in him again far more imperiously, after his extra-ordinary and impatient forbearance.

Thus I have briefly intimated what a beloved sin is; what thine may be; and how you may be deceived about it. For if you wouldst truly taste how gracious the Lord is, in a sweet communion with his blessed majesty; if you wouldst be intimately acquainted with the mystery of CHRIST, wherein are hid infinite heavenly treasures, and such pleasures, “as neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive; if you wouldst ever be fitly qualified to walk humbly with thy GOD, in the way which is called holy; as you must fall out for ever with all sin, so must you principally improve all thy spiritual forces, utterly to demolish the devil’s castle; to dethrone that grand empoisoner of thy soul, (and strongest bar to keep out acquaintance, and intercourse with GOD,) thy bosom sin.

II. Build all thy resolutions for heaven and God’s service, upon that strong and purest pillar, that main and most precious principle of Christianity, self-denial. There can

be no walking with GOD, no sweet communion, and sound peace at his mercy-seat, except for his sake

you be content to deny thyself, thy worldly wisdom, excellency of learning, applause with the most; thy passions, profits, pleasures, preferments, nearest friends, ease, liberty, life, any thing, every thing: and fear no loss; for all things else are nothing, to the least comfortable glimpse of God's face.,

III. Exercise thyself continually, in that only heaven upon earth, and sweetest sanctuary to an hunted soul, the life of faith: which to live in some good measure, is the duty and property of every living member of JESUS CHRIST. Love therefore, and labor to live by the power of faith., the life of salvation, sanctification, preservation.

1. Of salvation, thus: let thy humbled soul, groaning under the burden of sin, throw itself into the merciful arms of JESUS CHRIST, wounded, broken, and bleeding upon the cross; and there let it hold, and hide itself for ever in full assurance of eternal life, by virtue of that promise, John 3: 36, "He that believeth on the Son, has everlasting life." For having thus laid hold upon him, he by his Spirit does communicate first himself unto thee; then both the merit of his death for remission of thy sins; and of his active obedience for thy right to salvation;.,t.' and withal, the power of his Spirit, to quicken thee to the life of grace in this world, and to raise up thy body to the life of glory.

2. Of sanctification: if you always keep thy faith, the root from which all thine other graces spring, in life and vigor, you shall pray more comfortably, be more courageously patient, hear the Word more fruitfully, receive the sacraments more joyfully, pass the sabbaths more delightfully, confer more cheerfully, meditate more heavenly, walk in all the ways of new obedience with more strength, and conquest over corruptions. For ordinarily, every Christian shall find the exercise of other graces to be comfortable, or cold, according to the liveliness, or languishing of his faith.

3. Of preservation, both temporal and spiritual: in crosses, afflictions, and all God's outward angry visitations, by the power of such promises as those, Psal. lxxxix. 33, and 1. 15; Heb. 12: 7, 8, 11; 1 Thess. 3: 3; Acts 14: 22; Luke 9: 23. And in the course of thy particular calling: the duties and works whereof, if you discharge with conscientiousness, diligence, and prayer, you may go on with comfort, and freedom from torturing thoughtfulness; and leave the success of all thy labors unto the Lord, whatsoever it may be; resting sweetly, and ever relying upon that gracious promise, Heb. 13: 5, "I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee." Nay, in the loss of all earthly things in every kind: see Job. 3: 17, 18, "although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the field, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will

rejoice in the Lord: I will joy in the God of my salvation.” In oppositions against the raising or restoring of spiritual buildings by the ministry of the Word: or in temptations against a man’s personal progress, and holding out unto the end; by renouncing our own strength, disclaiming the arm of flesh, and crying in every encounter, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord.” In the valley of the shadow of death; by an assurance of God’s merciful, omnipotent presence, Psal. 23: 4. Amidst variety of temptations, relying on those words, 1 Cor. 10: 12, James 1: 2, Isa. 30: 18. Thus in any trouble of soul, body, good name, outward state, present, or to come, you may by the sovereign power of faith working upon the Word, not only draw out the sting and expel the poison of it; but also create comfort to thy soul, and maintain it, in despite of all opposition, in a constant spiritual gladness. For all those promises, whereupon thy heavy heart in such cases may repose, are sealed with the bloody sufferings of CHRIST. And if you be in CHRIST, all are as certainly thine, as the heart in thy body, or blood in thy veins.

IV. Settle in thine heart a true estimate of the substance, power, and marrow of Christianity: which does not consist, as too many suppose, in outward shows, profession, talking; in holding strict opinions, contesting against the corruptions of the times; in the work wrought, external religious exercises, hearing, reading, conference, and the like: but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy

Ghost; in meekness, tender-heartedness, love; in patience, humility, contentedness; in mortification of sin, moderation of passion, and holy guidance of the tongue; in works of mercy, justice, and truth; in fidelity, and painfulness in our callings; in reverence unto superiors, love of our enemies, an open-hearted, real, fruitful affection and bounty to God's people; in heavenly-mindedness, self-denial, the life of faith; in disesteem of earthly things, and a resolute hatred of sin; in approving our hearts in God's presence; a sweet communion with him, and a comfortable longing for the coming of the Lord JESUS.

Yet mistake me not; you must have a show, must profess and talk, if you wouldst have CHRIST to own thee at that dreadful day, Mark 8: 38. It is therefore an idle cavil of some, to say, Cannot a man be religious to him-self, except he let all the world know it For where the power of religion is, there will be the show also. Painted fire shines not, ascends not, heats not; but true fire is ever inseparably attended with these properties. If true grace be in the heart, it will shine in our words, actions, and whole conversation. He that will take shows from the substance of religion, let him take brightness from the sun. show and profession of CHRIST before men is commanded, as well as the substance and soundness of heart, Rom. 10: 9, 10. Outward exercises of religion are, as it were, the body, without which the soul of Christianity path no existence.

V. Prize the fruition of GOD, a nearer communion with his blessed majesty, the love and light of his countenance; and thereupon a free and frequent access, with humble boldness, unto the throne of grace, at a far higher rate, than heaven and earth; as a real foretaste of eternal joys. For to say no more at this time, if you hold an holy familiarity with GOD, and he look pleasedly upon thee, you shall grasp JESUS CHRIST more sweetly in the arms of faith; partake more plentifully of the joyful freedom; presence, and communication of his comforting Spirit; be guarded more strongly and narrowly by his glorious angels, suck more heavenly manna out of the ministry, and other ordinances; walk in safety amongst the creatures, like an unconquerable lion. And if at any time you art seized upon by any cross or calamity from any of the creatures; any trouble or temptation from man or devil; yet the refreshing beams of God's face, shining through the darkness of such discomforts, will infinitely make amends for all. The poison and curse of them shall never come near thy soul. The Lord, in the mean time, like an eagle fluttering about her nest, will most tenderly defend and protect thee, Isa. xxxi. 5; and at length most certainly come, like a young lion roaring on his prey, for thy rescue and enlargement, Isa. xxxi. 4.

VI. Labor by a constant watch to keep thy heart in a spiritual temper, still sweetly content, and fruitfully conversant in the mystery of CHRIST, and secrets of his kingdom; which you shall more easily do, if you rejoice in

GOD, his Word, and graces, as thy chief joy. 2. By all earthly things he drawn to the love of heavenly. For though God has appointed but one Sabbath in seven days, yet to a Christian every day is sanctified to be a rest from all the deeds of the flesh, wherein he is to walk with his GOD, and show forth the religious keeping of his heart, in every action of his life; so making every passage of his particular calling, a part of Christian obedience. 3. As soon as you discoverest any spiritual weakness or decay, any extraordinary assault, temptation, deadness, complain betimes; cry mightily to GOD, give him no rest, neither give over seeking, until he return unto thy soul, If ordinary means will not prevail, press upon him with extraordinary. If then he do not revive thee, wait with a patient, wakeful longing of all the powers of thy soul; and then all this while thy soul will be still in its true spiritual temper, 4. Decline watchfully all occasions of falling from thy first love, fervency, and heavenly-mindedness; as spiritual pride, desire to be rich, discontinuance of thine intimateness with the godly, neglect of thy particular calling, or daily watch over thy heart; ungodly company, formality in religious duties, coldness and customariness in the use of the means. 5. Suffer not thine affections to be set upon praise, profit, the favor of great ones, mirth, pleasure, ease, earthly contentment, and comforts, preferment, wealth, long life, or any worldly thing; but disesteem all other delights in respect of doing God's will; which should ever be unto thee meat and drink, thy only paradise upon earth.

VII. Let thy soul often soar upon the wings of faith, unto the glory of the empyrean heaven, where God dwells, and hase itself before-hand in that everlasting bliss above. Oh I think with thyself, (though it far pass the reach of any mortal thought,) what an infinite sweetness it will be, to look for ever upon the glorious body of JESUS CHRIST; and to consider that every vein of that blessed body bled to bring thee to heaven! To say nothing of the beauty of that ever-blessed place, of that joyful communion with Christian friends, and all the crowned saints, and innumerable felicities more, which surpass the comprehension of the largest heart; contemplate principally the fountain of all thy bliss: how the mighty Jehovah, God blessed for ever, will pour out of himself, perpetual rivers of unutterable joys and pleasures, upon thy glorified body and soul, through all eternity; even as the sun pours out his beams, and shining every day afresh upon the world, without emptiness or end. And with such variety, (for he is infinite,) that they shall be unto thee as fresh, as new, as sweet, as ravishing, millions of years after you have dwelt in those mansions of rest, as they were, the very first moment you enteredst that blissful place. If a man do but once a day seriously and solemnly thus cast up the eye of his faith, upon that never-fading crown of life, he may, with more affectionate freedom, and contempt of earth, have his conversation above, and turn the current of all his delights, love, and longings, with more constancy towards his heavenly home. These preparatives premised, I proceed to some

general directions for a more comfortable walking in the way that is called holy.

I. First, have a special eye to a sincere, constant, and fruitful performance of holy duties, God's services. And, to say nothing at this time of private reading the Scriptures, public hearing the Word, personal prayer, and with thy yoke-fellow, (if you live in that estate,) singing of psalms, meditation, days of humiliation, (of which you must proportionably make conscience in their due place, observing also in them the ensuing cautions: for a customary neglect of any holy duty, religious exercise, Divine ordinance, may bring a damp upon the rest, and a consumption upon the whole body of Christianity;—I say, to leave these,) I only at this time purposely advise, for the better sanctifying thyself and all about thee, to a more successful managing of affairs, either spiritual or civil; that you being master of a family, (for I single out such an one for instance,) be ever sure to glorify GOD, amidst thy people, by morning and evening sacrifice of prayers and praises. In the discharge of which main duty of Christianity, utterly neglected by the most, and empoisoned to many, by their resting only in the work wrought, take heed of declining into a form or customariness, which will most certainly draw the very life-blood and breath out of those holy businesses. Labor, therefore, by a reverent collecting of all the powers of thy soul, and fresh renewing thy watch at every several time, to preserve heart and spirit in those daily devotions. Which you

shall the better do, if you look to, 1. A right disposition before the doing: 2. A spiritual behavior in it: 3. An holy carriage afterward.

For the first, 1. Come not before God with any sin lying upon thy conscience unrepented of, or delighted in. 2. Neither with passion, wrath, or heart-burning against any. 3. Stir up thy faith, about the things desired and deprecated. Briefly, in the apostle's words, "Lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting." Bring, 1: Resolution against all sin, in respect of God: 2. Peace and appeased passions, in respect of men: 3. Assurance to be heard, in respect of thyself. Or thus: Before you fall upon thy knees, shake off three empoisoning binderances, which will clog the wings of thy prayers, that they will never be able to ascend unto heaven: outward sin, inward anger, distrust: and possess thy heart of three excellent helps: 1. A right apprehension of God's dreadfulness, purity, power. 2. A true sense of thy own vileness. 3. A hearty survey of the infiniteness of God's bounty, blessings, and compassionate forbearances towards thee.

For the second: 1. Repel with an undaunted spirit, SA-TAN's blasphemous injections, (if he be busy that way,) and he is ordinarily most spiteful against the best businesses, and the rather, because if they be heartily abominated, they are put upon the devil's score, and are only thy crosses, not thy sins. 2. Watch over the world with all care, that if it be possible, not an earthly thought may

creep into thy heart. 3. Strive to hold thy heart in heat, as well in confession as deprecation; in deprecation as petition; in intercession as for personal blessings; as well for purity of heart, as pardon of sin; though there may be difference of heat, and crying unto GOD, according to the necessity of the blessing asked in the prayer. Prayer is the creature of the Holy Ghost, every part whereof, we should heartily desire, that he would animate thoroughly, even as the soul does the body.

For the third, with all watchfulness, pursue and press after the things prayed for, by a timely apprehension, fruitful exercise, and utmost improvement of all occasions, ordinances, helps, and heavenly offers, which may any ways concur to the obtaining of them. For instance: you prayest for knowledge: walk then, when you have done, with a constant endeavor, in the strength of this prayer, through all the means, reading, hearing, confer ring, practising, (for even that also is a means to increase knowledge, especially experimental,) for the storing of thy understanding with all sacred illuminations and holy senses of God's saving Word. Let no opportunity pass; be violent in catching all occasions for the hoarding up in thine heart such hidden treasures. "If you criest after knowledge," says Solomon, "and liftest up thy voice for understanding," chap. 2: 3, (there is the prayer): "if you seekest her as silver, and searchest for us, as for hidden treasures, ver. 4, (there is the endeavor): " Then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge

of GOD,” ver. 5, (there is the blessing.) Again, you prayest to be preserved out of ill company, you dost well: but when you have done, dost you make conscience of that counsel of Solomon, Prov. 4: 14, 15, and by the power thereof, oppose the cunning enticements, and cursed importunities of thine old companions and brethren in iniquity “Enter not,” says Solomon, “into the path of the wicked; and go not in the way of wicked men. Avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away.” He that makes prayer the end of prayer, thinking when that holy duty is done, that there is no more to be done, prays to no purpose. There must be good doings, as well as good ordinances. He that does not earnestly afterwards set himself against sins deprecated, and pursue with zeal the good things petitioned, his prayer is not worth a rush.

II. Decline idleness, the very canker of the soul, the devil’s cushion; his tide-time of temptation, wherein he carries with much ease, the current of our corrupt affections, to any cursed sin. And be diligent in some lawful, honest, particular calling; not so much to engross wealth, as for necessary provision for thy family and posterity. And in obedience to that common charge, laid upon the sons of Adam, to the world’s end; “in the sweat of thy face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground.” 1. But ever go about the affairs of thy calling with a heavenly mind, seasoned and sanctified with habitual prayer, ejaculatory elevations, willingness, if God so please, to be dissolved, and to be with CHRIST; pregnant with

heavenly matter and meditations, picked out of the passages of thy present business. For instance; let the husband-man in seed-time think, If I now take not the season, I shall have no harvest, but starve in the winter: so if I gather not grace in this sunshine of the gospel, I shall find nothing but horror upon my bed of death. 2. In all the business of thy personal calling, let thy eye be upon God's glory, as the end of all thy actions, and in them seek and serve that glorious end of God's honor, not so much in procuring thine own, as the good of the church, of thy neighbors, and family. 3. By earthly employments, do not become an earth-worm. In using the world, grow not a worldling, and such an one as finds more sweetness in worldly dealings and profits, than in thy heavenly traffic and treasures.

III. In thy solitary seasons: 1. Single out some special matter to meditate on; both to prevent vain and foolish thoughts, impertinent wanderings, and the trifling away thy precious time; and also to keep the powers of thy soul alive. When can. you be alone, and not have just cause, either to busy thy mind about some lawful affairs of thy calling; or to strive against some corruption, which troubles the peace of thy conscience, or to break out in the praises of GOD, or to employ thy mind on some subject of heavenly meditation, whereof there is so great variety 2. Watch and withstand, with all godly jealousy and care, two dangerous evils: 1st. Thoughts of pleasures from thy youthful sins, which at such times are ready to make re-

entry. And in this point take heed, lest the devil delude thee in the glory of an angel. For in thy solitary musing, you may possibly resume the abominations of thy former life, especially of that sin, which was thy darling pleasure, on purpose to bewail and detest them; and yet, without a vigilant eye, that which was intended for an exercise of repentance, may cursedly end in the ideal re-enjoyment of old filthy pleasures. 2dly, Take heed also at such times of acting any new sins, upon sensual suppositions, and imaginary plots: as of worldliness, speculative wantonness, or dishonoring God's providence by an unnecessary forecasting of fearful accidents. 3. Let not pass such a golden opportunity without some conference with God in secret. Cry out towards heaven for some special graces, by which you may be most enabled to glorify God most, and to keep in thy breast a cheerful and heavenly spirit, as for precious jewels to be purchased with the loss of ten thousand worlds; but not to be parted with for as many worlds as you have hairs upon thy head. Beg with earnestness mortifying grace, and spiritual strength, for the conquering of those unruly passions that most haunt thee. Let a sorrowful survey of all thy sins draw from thee some hearty groan, and fervent ejaculations for mercy and pardon; or a summary view of God's blessings fill thy heart with lowly and thankful thoughts. Thus let some part of thy solitary time be sure to be seasoned with holy musings, and talk with God.

IV. Concerning company, I advise, 1. That you never cast

thyselves into wicked company, upon choice; and abide no longer with them at any time, than you have sound warrant to do. It is not for the honor or comfort of God's children familiarly to converse with graceless men. There is a strange power in ill company, to empoison and pervert even the best dispositions. But the hurt which the Christian does take in this regard, is most from civil men, whited tombs, who being unseasoned with the power of inward sanctification, secretly infuse, if not a notorious infection with some scandalous sin; yet many times a fearful defection from zeal in the ways of God. Throw a blazing firebrand into the snow, and its brightness and heat will be quickly put out. Let a Christian but for a while abandon his communion with God's children, and stay in the company of those who are cold and careless; and he shall, in a very short time, find his zeal to be much cooled, the tenderness of his conscience much qualified with worldly wisdom; much dullness of heart, deadness of spirit, drowsiness, and heartlessness in his affections to holy things; and an universal decay of his graces insensibly to grow upon him. In this respect many Christians do themselves much injury. For they some-times unadvisedly, by reason of kindred, or for old acquaintance, hold too near correspondence with such as are at best only civil men; and they, wanting both heart and skill to uphold any holy conversation, or to afford mutual help, in the feeling parts of sanctification, are occasions to put God's children out of use with the language of Ca-

naan, and to bereave them of much zeal, comfort, feelings of God's favor, boldness in his ways, and cheerfulness in the exercises of religion.

2. In the second place: if you desire to converse with some of thine unconverted kindred, neighbors, and old acquaintance, for their spiritual good, observe these three rules: 1. Let there be good probability of there being more spiritual wisdom and Christian resolution in thee to convert. them, than poison of worldly wisdom in them, to pervert thee. 2. See that thy heart be sincere, and you seek truly their conversion, and not thine own secret satisfaction: for in this point thine own heart will be ready to deceive thee. 3. As physicians of the body arm themselves with strong preservatives, when they visit contagious patients; so be you sure to furnish thyself beforehand with prayer, meditation, the sword of the Spirit, store of persuasive matter, strength of reasons, and unshaken resolutions, to repel all spiritual infection.

3. In the company of true Christians, which you should prize as heaven upon earth, bring, 1. A cheerful heart. Methinks, though you should come amongst the saints with a sad heart, overcast with clouds of heaviness; yet the faces of those, whom hereafter you shall meet in heaven, and there with incomparable joy behold for ever, clothed with glory, should dispel them all. I know them, who, being cast sometimes against their wills among profane company, are quite out of their element all the while;

struck dead in the place, as they say; as solitary as in the silentest desert. But let them come amongst Christians, and they are quite other men, as full of lightsomeness and life, as full of heat and heaven, as if they had the one foot in the porch of paradise already. Sadness is not seasonable, where such precepts as these have place: “Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout’ for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.” 2. A fruitful heart, full as the moon with gracious matter to uphold edifying conference. Being forward and free without any hurtful bashfulness, or vain-glorious aim, both to communicate to others the hidden treasures of heavenly knowledge, and also by moving of questions, and ministering occasion mutually to draw from them the waters of life, for the refreshing and quickening of the deadness and unheavenliness of thine own heart. And here it will be a profitable wisdom, to observe each others several endowments, and with wise insinuations, to provoke them to pour out themselves in those things, wherein they have best experience and most excellency. Some are more skilful in discussing controverted points: others in resolving cases of conscience some in discovering the devil’s depths, and treading the maze of his manifold temptations: others in comforting afflicted spirits, and speaking to the hearts of mourners in Zion. I am persuaded many times, many worthy discourses he buried in the breasts of understanding men, by reason of the sinful silence, and barrenness of those about them. And

there-fore Christians ought to be more forth-putting, active, and fruitful this way.

3. An humble heart, rejoicing to exchange and enjoy heavenly consultations with the poorest and most neglected Christian. If you be haunted with the white devil of spiritual pride, it is likely you wilt be either too profuse, and so engross all the talk; or else too curious, and so say no more than may serve to breed an admiration of thy worth; which is a very sinful and fearful fault. There is no depth of knowledge, no heighth of zeal, but may be enlarged and inflamed by conference with the poorest Christian.

V. But above all, be most busy with thy heart: for it is the root that either poisons or sweetens all the rest. Attend, therefore, amongst others, to these three points of special consequence with all seriousness and zeal.

1. To captivate and conform the thoughts and imaginations of thy heart, to the sovereignty and rules of grace. If thy change in words, actions, and all outward carriage were angelical; yet if thy thoughts were the same as ever, you wouldst still be a limb of SATAN. Purity in the inward parts is the most sound evidence of our interest in CHRIST's saving passion: see Jer. 4: 14, Isa. lv. 7. Now, that you may the better keep the thoughts of thy heart in obedience unto CHRIST, acknowledge, First, the pestilence of that wicked proverb, Thoughts are free. It is true, the invisible projects of the heart he not within the walk

of human justice. But there is an all-seeing eye in heaven, to which the blackest midnight is as the brightest noon-tide. Whereas then the natural man is wont to let his heart run into idle imaginations, without remorse or restraint; do you make thy sanctification sure, by this infallible sign, that you sufferest the consideration of God's all-seeing eye, and check of a tender conscience, to range thy thoughts into order, and to confine and keep them within a holy compass.

Secondly, acknowledge that you must be accountable for every wandering thought, as well as for idle words and wicked actions. Therefore, if you be not exactly vigilant over thy heart, you may justly fear, that, upon the opening of the book of thy conscience, at those two dreadful days, of death, and the last judgment, innumerable armies of exorbitant thoughts, which have lain in ambush as it were, in the secret corners of thy deceitful heart, will charge thee with a far heavier account, than you have seriously thought upon heretofore.

Thirdly, acknowledge that God's glory must as well shine in thy thoughts, in the invisible workings, intentions, and desires of the heart, as in thine outward conversation. As God expects service from his children in words and works; so there is also a thought-service, a thought-worship, as I may call it, which is very precious in his eyes, as springing more immediately from the heart, wherein he principally delights; and because the

secrecy of it is attended with more sincerity. Remember therefore to render with all reverence and zeal unto the Father of spirits, and Lord of thy soul, the daily tribute of thy thought-service, as well as the tongue-service and hand-service. And the rather, because opportunities, abilities, and means may fail for outward performances, but the heart is ever at leisure and liberty to think nobly. No times, no tyrants, no wants or restraint, can hinder it from an invisible fruition of GOD, with thoughts of sweetest rapture and reverence, of love and lowliest adoration; from hating itself in the meritorious blood of the immaculate Lamb, with thoughts of inexplicable peace, joy, and triumph; and from cleaving to the promises of life, and diving into the mystery of grace with purest delight, and victorious faith; from being as a mountain of myrrh and incense, sending up a spiritual sacrifice of praise-full thoughts, infinitely admiring and magnifying the glory and goodness of that merciful hand, which wrote thy name in the book of life, suffered the dearest blood in his Son's heart to "be spilt as water upon the ground, for the washing of thy body and soul from sin; and after a span of time, will set a crown of eternity upon thy head. And, besides God's more special acceptance of this invisible service, it is ordinarily full of more spirituality and life, by reason that it is nearest to the object of adoration. The best man, though he may labor to do his best every way, yet he shall find a difference in his duties and services towards God. His works do not answer with that exactness to his words: his words cannot express the thoughts

of his heart: the thoughts of his heart come infinitely short of the excellency of God. Those streams which are next to the well-head, are purest. The thoughts of a sanctified heart, laying hold upon him, with immediate apprehension, that most amiable, holy, and glorious object, God blessed for ever, give him his due and reverend attributions, with more heartiness, life, and heavenliness, than words or actions are wont; though all a man's best, in thought, word, and deed, falls fearfully short of what we owe and ought to do.

2. Keep a continual and watchful guard over thy heart. It is like a city, liable every moment both to inward commotion and outward assault. The fountain of original impurity, though its main stream be stayed by the sanctifying power of CHRIST's grace; yet it does still less or more bubble up. The world does labor continually with her three great battering engines of pleasure, riches, and honors, to lay it waste. The devil watches every opportunity to hurl in his fiery darts, and cast all into combustion. Precious, therefore, is that precept, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," Prov. 4: 23. That you may do this with more success, First, watch' over the windows of thy soul, the senses. It is incredible what pollution the devil conveys insensibly through these inlets of sin, into their bosoms who are careless this way. To instance in the ear and eye: a tale-bearer tells thee, that such a one said of thee so and so, when in truth, it was neither so nor so. You presently conceivest thoughts of displeasure against

that man, that. never thought thee ill. Here you spillst innocent blood; for thy heart may kill, as well as thy tongue. and hand. It is fit therefore for every honest face to fill itself with frowns of distaste and indignation at the approach of any tale-teller. “As the north wind driveth away rain, so does an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.” Concerning the eye, David’s example may warn the holiest men to the world’s end, to be very watchful with a restless jealousy, over that wandering sense. Secondly, resist and crush every exorbitant thought, which draws to sin, at the very first rising. Say unto thyself, “If I commit this sin, it will cost me more smart, before I can obtain assurance of pardon, than the sensual pleasure is worth: if I never repent, it will be the damnation of my soul.” Thirdly, entertain always with all holy desire, and make much of; all good motions put into thy heart by the blessed Spirit. Feed, enlarge, and improve them to the utmost, with meditation, prayer, and practice. So you shall preserve thy heart in a soft, holy, comfortable temper, which is a singular happiness.

3. Often lift you up thy heart towards heaven. What Christian heart can endure to discontinue its sweet familiarity and humble intercourse with God for one day Let thy broken heart therefore every day, besides ordinary ejaculations, evening and morning, and upon other special occasions, be sure, 1st, To have itself in the depth of God’s mercies in CHRIST, that it may be kept thankful, and inclined to all holy duties. 2dly, To kiss sweetly the

glorified body of our crucified Laid with the lips of affectionate love, (though the distance be great, yet the hand of faith will bring them easily together,) that it may be preserved in peace, purify, and opposition unto sin. 3dly, To cast the eye of hope unto the unutterable excellencies of that immortal crown above, which after this life shall be set upon thy head by the hand of God; a very glimpse whereof is able both to sweeten the basest wrongs from the world and wicked men, and to dispel those mists of fading vanities, which this great dunghill of the world, heated by the fire of in-ordinate lusts, is wont to interpose between the sight of men's souls and the bliss of heaven.

VI. Be very watchful over thy predominant passion; whether it be fear, sorrow, love, or anger. All of them are raging enough; but commonly one rules over all the rest, in the unregenerate man; nay, too often offers to rise in rebellion even against the sanctified soul. Whatsoever it be, 1. In thy private morning sacrifice, be sure to pour forth the deepest groans and strongest cries for mortifying grace against it, and comfortable conquest over it. 2. Cut off all occasions, whatsoever it cost thee, which may any ways kindle it. Withdraw the fuel that ministers food unto that flame, though it shall be as painful unto thee, as the plucking out of the right eye.

VII. Prize, as a most comfortable perfection in Christi-

anity, a right ordering of thy tongue. It is of special importance for preservation both of outward and inward peace. Original corruption has put upon every man's tongue a fiery edge, whereby like a sword, it kills and slays on all sides; wounds the souls of the present; mangles the good names of the absent, and so hases itself in continual bloodshed, (for there is heart-murder, and tongue-murder, as well as hand-murder,) until the attainment of this grace. That it may therefore neither be unseasonably idle, nor sinfully exercised, take notice of, and practice.

I. That much and generally neglected duty of Christian reproof. You shall meet now and then, upon unavoidable necessity, wits men that swear, blaspheme God's name, talk filthily, or rail against good men; besides many other base and profane speeches. In this case wicked men meddle not. They hold it a point of unnecessary preciseness to mar the mirth, by calling sin into question. They are commonly excellent in railing upon a good man in his absence; but they are stark naught in reproving a notorious wretch unto his face. If they open their mouth in this way, it is commonly in form, for some one's sake in the company; who, they know, cannot endure it. But in such cases, the Christian is truly solicitous and zealous, and careful how to frame and hold a serious, wise, and seasonable contradiction to the language of hell. He dares not hold his peace, lest he be guilty, of the parties going on in sin; of betraying God's glory by a cowardly silence;

and of wounding his own conscience. For this kind of reproving then, the Christian is not to be censured. Conscience, charity, and God's commandment call upon him for the performance of this needful duty, whensoever necessity, or a warrantable calling shall have cast him among profane wretches; except they be dogs, or swine. CHRIST himself has commanded, that pearls and holy things shall not be cast away upon such.

The ground of this commandment of CHRIST I take to be twofold: 1. A compassionate care of GOD, even over the lives of his children. Besides the continual guard of the blessed angels, his own all-seeing and all-pitying eye does ever graciously watch over them; and therefore he forbids them to cast themselves into the mouth of a barking dog, or upon the paw of a revengeful lion: that is, he would not have his child to vouchsafe so much as a reproof to any blasphemous wretch, or desperate swaggerer, that would furiously fly in his face for offering him a pearl. 2. An holy jealousy over the glory and majesty of his own blessed word. It is that holy wisdom which issued immediately out of his own infinite understanding. It is far more pure and unspotted than silver tried in a furnace of earth, fined seven-fold. It is a sacred pearl, fashioned by his own almighty hand in the palaces of heaven; and therefore most unworthy to be trodden under foot, or trampled in the mire by any sensual swine. These two reasons of the commandment he in the text, "Give ye not that which is holy unto dogs, &c. lest they

trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.” Whence we have also some light to discern who are dogs, and who are swine.

1. By dogs, we see, are meant obstinate enemies, that maliciously revile the ministry of the word, and the messengers thereof; who not only tread the words of instruction under foot, but turn again, and rend the teachers, and furiously fly in the face of those who fairly tell them of their faults. Consider this and tremble, all ye that are become scornful and furious opposers to the power and purity of the word, and to its faithful ministers. Alas! poor wretches! you cast yourselves desperately into that accursed and horrible condition, that every man is bound in conscience not to afford you so much as an admonition, or reproof, or a caveat to prevent those curses, which are coming upon you. And you willfully draw upon your own heads that most fearful doom from God’s Spirit, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” He that rails against the power of grace, let him continue still a mad dog. He that sets himself maliciously against the ministry of the word; let that man receive no comfort or benefit by the word of life. If he will needs do it, let him roar still, swagger, be drunk, despair, die, And be damned.

2. By swine are meant those scurrilous wretches, who scornfully trample under foot all holy instructions and reproofs. Some of these are swine, as it were, only in

practice. They do not say much, or keep any great grunting against good men; but they feed insatiably, though silently, upon the dross of sensual pleasures. And if at any time a pearl be cast in their way, (I mean, a seasonable reproof,) they trample it in the mire, and, with a brutish baseness, tread it under foot; because indeed they hate to be reformed, and are resolved not to exchange these worldly pleasures for an hundred heavens. Other swine there are, both in practice and profession; who, besides their hating to be reformed, and resolution not to forego their present pleasures, are also possessed with a spirit of scoffing. These are rather wild boars: for with a furious insolence, they provoke and challenge the mighty Lord of heaven, about the truth of his judgments and promises. Let all swinish wretches consider this, and tremble; who, with sinful greediness feed upon earthliness; who willfully wallow in the mud of vanishing pleasures, and will not be washed; who come to, and depart from the house of GOD, with a resolution not to change their old fashions, (say the preacher what he will,) but to live, and end their days in their former courses of profaneness. Cursed also is the condition of all you that are scoffers at godliness and good men. You have wearied yourselves so long in walking and standing in wicked ways, that you are now set down at rest in the chair of scorers. And therefore, all those that stand on the Lord's side are commanded by CHRIST, there to leave you in your damned case, and to disquiet you no further. And what an horrible depth of spiritual misery is

this, that you run furiously towards the pit of hell, and must have no body to stay you; not a man to call and cry unto you, that the fiery lake is a little before you

Though we have thus much light from the natural properties of dogs, and swine to descry them; yet Christians are sore troubled many times, when to speak, and when to hold their peace; when to repute persons, dogs, and swine, when not. And I do not see how any constant rule can be given in this case; it is clothed with such a variety of circumstances. The advice which I would give is this: when a man is perplexed what to do amongst profane company, let him consult with those bosom counsellors, look unto his spiritual wisdom, to his heart, and to his conscience. These must be his guides in these cases: and they are counsellors ever at hand.

1. His spiritual wisdom is to guide him in a right apprehension of circumstances, and to define when he is to interpose, and in what manner. It must tell him secretly, when the cause of GOD, or the innocency of a good man calls specially upon him for an apology. It must inform him how he must reprove; whether directly and in plain terms, or by intimation, and indirectly; whether personally, or in the general; whether in a fair or milder manner, or with a more bold and resolute spirit; whether in hot blood, as it were, or afterward to take occasion to censure the same sin; whether only by discountenance, or discourse; by a silent disapprobation, (which, I think, may

be sufficient for some men, at some times, in some companies,) or with solemn protestation, and a professed opposition and dislike.

2. Let him also look to his heart, that his reproof spring not from any imperious humor of censuring and meddling with his brethren; from a proud vein of contradicting; out of a stoical sourness, and commanding surliness; from any purpose to disgrace and grieve the party; from pharisaical severity; from a secret desire of purchasing reputation; or from any other by-respect: but from an heart truly humbled with its own infirmities, zealously thankful unto God for preserving him from the like outrage; graciously melted into commiseration of the offender; lifted up in a secret supplication for the pardon of its own sin, success of the reproof, and salvation of the party.

3. His conscience must guide him in the right path, between two extremes, which, in these cases men are apt to incur: I mean, faint-hearted silence, and furious zeal. Men, many times, by reason of unChristian cowardliness, would gladly make all such offenders dogs and swine; that thereby they might challenge the privilege of exemption from the discharge of that Christian duty. Though their ears be filled with the oaths and blasphemies of those that are about them, and railings against good men, and the ways of God; yet they never open their mouth. Oh! these are vile cowards in good causes,

and a kind of traitors to Christianity. By such sinful silence, they labor to purchase a name of no-meddlers in other men's matters; of wiser and more moderate Christians. But let them know, that such no-meddling is a kind of soul-murdering. Such wisdom is not that of the Scripture, but the wiliness of that red dragon, suggested by hell. Some others, it may be, but not near so many, run into the other extreme, and out of a furious zeal, with boisterousness fly in the face of some desperate swaggerer, with an indigested and unseasonable reproof; whereby they both incur the guilt of giving an holy thing unto a dog, and unnecessary danger from the fury of the party. Or else for want of spiritual wisdom, they tender an admonition to some such contemptuous swinish wretch, as will put by the word of truth with a scurrilous jest; or with a dull, and scornful sottishness trample it under foot.

These cautions premised, every Christian ought to address himself with resolution to discharge this duty of reproof, when a just occasion requires it at his hands. For these reasons:

First, In respect to the party offending, a seasonable reproof may, by the blessing of GOD, be an occasion of conversion to the offender. And let him know, that he who a converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." With what eagerness and zeal ought we to stop

the course of a reasonable creature towards the pit of hell
Speak then boldly in the cause of GOD, when you Near-
est thy brother blaspheme his name, jest with his word,
talk filthily, rail against holiness, slander good men;
plead for profane pastimes, for they are so many mortal
stabs to his own poor soul; besides the natural infectious-
ness of such speeches, which may do much mischief to
the standers by. Though thy reproof prevail not at the pre-
sent; yet you knows not what impression it may have af-
terward upon his hard heart, whereby perhaps he may
think upon a new course, and so you be a blessed instru-
ment of saving a soul.

But if it have not so happy a success upon his soul, yet
perhaps you may thereby tame his insolence, and so cool
and confound his swaggering humor, that he will not
glory in his villany. If a profane wretch will needs swear,
and rail against the servants of GOD, yet let him know,
that all the while he fights against GOD, damns his own
soul, and pleases none but devils, drunkards, and devilish
men. If he will needs labor against the ways of GOD, let
him know that his name shall rot after him as vilely as
his his carcass in the grave; and himself burn in hell ev-
erlastingly, if he hold on in that humor without timely
repentance and re-formation.

Secondly, In such cases the Christian must speak in re-
spect of himself. As when the air is empoisoned, men use
some perfume, that so they may avoid the noisomeness

of the smell, and repel the contagion: so when any profane wretch has let fall any rotten speech, the Christian, with a present counter-poison, as it were, of a seasonable reproof, should stop his own apprehension, lest any baser infection insinuate, and stain the soul. Besides silence at such a time would seem to bewray thy cowardliness in the cause of God. For it would seem strange, that You, who makest a show of standing on the Lord's side, should hear the name of God profaned, or the innocence of a good man trampled upon, and yet never open thy mouth. As you therefore desirest to hold it thy crown and honor to be champion unto the mighty Lord of heaven, and the protector of the good names of good men, be ever ready to open thy mouth, when a just apology in any of these respects is needful. Add to this, if thy conscience be enlightened, awake, tender, and rightly informed, it will smite thee after the omission of such a duty; when afterwards you considerest that by thy cowardly silence thy soul is accountable for that sin. As you then wouldst keep all in quiet in thine own bosom, suffer not blasphemies, obscenities, railing, and other such talk to pass uncensured. It was the voice of cruel Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But every true and tender-hearted Christian does grieve to see so many of his brethren stick fast in the teeth of that red dragon, and therefore labors by all means he can to rescue them; to see so many about him run as furiously as they can, to drown themselves in the pit of endless perdition; and therefore, as occasion serves, he calls and cries unto them to stay their

course, before the hellish gulf has shut her mouth upon them.

Thirdly, In respect of those which are present, 1. By thy speaking in such a case, you may lay, as it were, the spirit of profaneness for that time; so that it will not rage in the rest, as otherwise it would. For we may sometimes observe, that a seasonable reproof from a man of understanding, upon a fellow that behaves as though swearing were his portion, and traducing the saints his trade, does so confound the rest of the same crew, that they are quite put out of their humor. 2. You may hereby uphold the weak, that they be not scandalized. 3. You may encourage the hearts of stronger Christians, that they be not cast down with the domineering of profaneness.

Fourthly, In respect of God himself, reprove, 1. That though the days wherein we live, be strangely profane, yet that it may appear, God has some to speak for him: that here and there God has a champion, who, fearless of the face of a man, dares defend his ways, and stand on his side. 2. But above all, let that strict charge from God's own mouth, (Levit. xix. 17, "You shall not hate thy brother in thine heart: you shall in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him,") fright every one of us out of our sinful silence and cowardliness this way.

Upon the whole, as to this point, take notice of a three-fold duty, which lies upon every Christian in his carriage towards men before their faces: 1. Christian admonition:

as, if a brother be overtaken with a fault, or some less offence, we are to admonish him in the spirit of meekness, Gal. 6: 1. 2. Christian reproof: as, if he offend more grievously, we are freely to reprove him; and not to suffer sin to rest upon him, Levit. xix. 17.

3. Christian silence: as, if he be a son of Belial, a dog, or a swine, we are commanded by CHRIST to say nothing, Matt. 7: G. Neither private admonition, nor brotherly reproof is to be vouchsafed to profane ruffians, who would entertain it with cruelty or scurrility.

II. Observe a sanctified silence, from, 1. Rash censuring, which is severely censured by CHRIST himself, and set as a visible brand upon the face of the hypocrite. Leave pharisees and false hearts, to pass rash censures against those who are far better than themselves. A sincere heart is ever most censorious and severe against itself; most searching into, and sensible of its own sins. It knows right well, by experience, what bitterness of spirit springs from the survey of scandalous transgressions in cold blood. It feels deadness of heart, lessening of graces, loss of comforts to ensue upon every relapse. It finds too often, that if it foster in itself any corruption or secret lust, the Lord will not hear its prayers. It is well acquainted with the preciousness of a peaceful conscience, and God's favorable countenance, which it cannot possibly enjoy, if it be in any one sin. This being the experience of an upright heart, it is most eagle-eyed and watchful

over, most strict and severe against its own sins. Which home-employment hinders a man from too much meddling abroad. This world of work within, about his own soul, ties his tongue from being so busy in censuring other men's faults. As therefore you wouldst have a true testimony of taking thine own sins to heart, keep a constant and narrow watch over thy tongue: be very sparing in speaking the evil which you know of others: judge no man rashly.

Yea, but some will say, "Howsoever you put it upon profane men, yet it is well known your sort are the only shrewd censurers, very severe about other men's faults, and still ready, by their peremptory judging, to send all others to hell, save themselves, and those of their own sect." This I grant is many times the profane man's censure of the true Christian, and therein he discovers himself to be a true hypocrite. For he censures sincere-hearted men to be censorious, when himself is the only unconscionable censorer. He reproves God's faithful ones for reproving, when himself full often, amongst his companions, condemns for counterfeits, without all ground or truth, those whom the Lord himself justifies for true-hearted Nathanaels.

To rectify thy judgment in this point of private judging, observe, first, That all judging and censuring is not here condemned. We may judge the tree by its fruit. If we see a fellow incorrigible in his lewd rebellious courses; as

swearing, whoredom, scoffing at religion, and the like, we may (leaving his final doom to the Searcher of all hearts,) judge him, for the present, to be in a most wretched state. But in such cases, besides just cause, be sure of a warrantable calling, conscionable end, and no beam in thine own eye.

Secondly, Let us take notice of some differences between the true professor's and profane men's censuring. It differs in respect, 1, Of the object. The principal object of carnal men's censures is the zealous professor. Dogged they are many times among themselves, but to the people of God they are not only dogs, but enraged devils. The most resolute for God's glory, and in good causes, is ordinarily most railed against and reviled. The foul spirit of good fellowship, as they call it, is still foaming out against them the foulest censures: That they are hypocrites, humorists, pestilent fellows, and all that is nought. David was so charged by Saul and his courtiers, Jeremiah by the profane nobles, CHRIST himself by the Scribes and Pharisees, the primitive Christians by the heathens; and all that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS, must look for the same persecution amongst the men of this world. And in this itching humor of censuring the servants of GOD, the wicked are so eager, that rather than they will want matter, they will snatch it from the envenomed tongue of a tale-bearer; from the slanderous folly of some scurrilous jester, the frothy raving of a greasy, drunken alehouse-haunter; nay, rather than fail, forge it

out of their own profane fancies, and suck it, as they say, out of their own fingers. On the other side, the ordinary object of the Christian's censure is according to CHRIST's rule; those trees which discover them-selves by the fruits which hang upon them in the sight of the sun. And yet that also must be seasoned with charity, discretion, seasonableness, freedom from spleen, humor, and passion. As the hand fasteneth a salve upon any sore part of the body, and then covers it, so they apply a gentle and mild reproof, that it may secretly heal, and the world be never the wiser.

2. In respect of the order. The true Christian ever casts the first stone at himself, begins with himself, searcheth his own heart, censures his own ways, and abandons all his known sins; and then he may with more success censure others. But those who hate to be re-formed, begin with others, are most prying into other men's carriages, perusing other men's lives, but have never any leisure to look into their own hearts.

3. In respect of the manner. Pharisees are wont peremptorily to pass their censures upon the more righteous than themselves, with pride, scornfulness, and insultation; but the censures of Christians are mingled with much mercifulness, pity, and love.

4. In respect of truth. Profane men's censures of God's servants are many times, not only groundless and false, but also absurd, without any shadow of likelihood. The

enemies to CHRIST's ministry censured him as having a devil. Elijah was accounted a troubler of Israel; who was in truth, the very chariots and horsemen thereof. The princes suggested to the king, that Jeremiah was a traitor to the state; from which he was so far, that he desired his head to be waters, and his eyes springs of tears, that he might weep day and night for the desolations of it. Proportionable for monstrosity of falsehood, are many censures passed upon professors at this day. On the other side, God's people are very careful and tender what censures they pass upon others. They conceive and speak the best of every one, until his open fruits clearly convince the contrary. They are so far from violent wresting of men's words, or behavior to the worst sense, that if matters be but probable, they are ever carried the more charitable way. They are so far from censuring others without truth and proof, (which is the ordinary practice of most men) that they never speak the ill they certainly know by their brethren, but with fearfulness, and some kind of enforcement.

Secondly, be silent from slandering, and backbiting. Here I will say nothing of the grosser sorts of slander, because of them, God's children are more easily sensible. But let me a little advise and awaken thee to further inspection of the present point; lest sometimes even in telling the truth, you be intangled in the briars of this base sin, and justly incur the fault of a false accuser; which

you may many ways. 1. By discovering secret infirmities, which love, that covereth a multitude of sins, would have concealed. 2. By drawing out of other men's words, actions, and behaviors, aims, and intentions, which the author never dreamed of; and by fathering upon them such senses, as an impartial expositor could never possibly extract. It is the easiest thing of a thousand, to spoil the glory of the most beautiful actions with surmises of by-ends. For a man's own pride and that of the devil himself, are ready midwives at such monstrous conceptions. 3. By adding unto the truth, or detracting from it, or intermixing false, adulterate glosses. 4. By relating all the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth: but either with a spiteful heart; or in a scornful, and insulting manner; without any warrantable calling thereunto.

Here therefore it will be seasonable, for help against this more plausible, but pestilent kind of slandering, to tell you, that relating the evil that is true of another, in his absence, does brand you with the guilt of back-biters, save in such cases as these:

1. Of good to the party absent. For instance: you informest thy friend of a third man; telling him, that he begins to break out into bad courses, and so proceedest to a more particular discovery of his carriage: but all this purposely for the benefit of the party. And therefore you entreatest thy present friend, that he would improve the utmost of that power which he has, for his amendment.

2. Of expedience for him that heareth: when he is in danger of injury from the party spoken of. For instance: you may lawfully lay out a counterfeit in his colours, for prevention of the mischief, which might ensue, if his character were concealed.

3. Of necessity for him which speaketh: that he may be preserved from guilt, which by saying nothing, he should bring upon himself. For instance: there comes to thy notice some notorious villain, which concealment might animate to further excess; but seasonable advertisement given to authority, as to a magistrate, minister, tutor, father, master, or governor of a family, might be a means to stay the torrent. In this case you have a calling to reveal, inform, and implore superior assistance. And therefore those of the house of Chloe did well to certify Paul, of the disorders amongst the Corinthians: and Paul's sister's son, to acquaint the chief captain, with that devilish plot against Paul. Otherwise, both you and they, by cowardly silence might incur guilt even for other men's sins so unhappily concealed.

4. Fourthly, when a seasonable, warrantable occasion is given thereby, of performing some Christian duty, as,

1. Of instruction, and forewarning others. You have a friend, whom you seest, and fearest is entering a licentious course; whereupon you tellest him, that such and such a man, from contempt of the word, profanation of the sabbath,. disobedience to parents, fell into a knot of

lewd companions, then to gaming, at last, to the gallows. And therefore you advisest him to take heed in time.

2. Of praising God for the rooting out of some implacable persecutor. Upon which occasion thou discoverest unto thy friend many passages and plots of his cruelty and hate against the kingdom of CHRIST. But in such cases look unto thy heart with extraordinary watchfulness, that you do it simply and sincerely; out of zeal to the glory of GOD, prosperity of the gospel, and peace of the church: otherwise, instead of a Christian duty, it will prove a cursed cruelty.

3. Of prayer. You art acquainted with the secret plots of some tyrant against the people of God; where-upon you unmaskest his malice amongst thy Christian friends, to the end that they may contribute their prayers for the confusion of all the devices of hell. Tears, patience, and prayers, were ever the defensive weapons of God's people. Or thus: you observe one to have continued long a professor, but now unhappily he begins to grow negligent, to suffer immoderate employment, and entanglement in the world, to waste his heavenly-mindedness; so that in all likelihood God will shortly give him over unto some scandalous fall, as a punishment of his back-sliding: whereupon you discoverest unto thy Christian friends his declining state, only that they may join with thee in prayer, that the Lord would be pleased to stay him, and re-establish him in his first love.

4. Of vindicating the power and truth of religion. Thus, you art in company, where you hearest a mere civil man, or formal professor at the best, of whom you thyself can aver out of thy certain particular knowledge, that he is utterly unacquainted with the mystery of godliness; I say, you hearest such a man commended for his religion, and fear of God; which commendation, if he carry away without contradiction, the rest of the company may be very eager to follow such a precedent. Now in this case, it may concern thee, but with as much wisdom, discretion, and charity as you can possibly use, to disrobe such a person of the reputation of that holiness which he never had; lest both the by-standers be encouraged to rest short of a title to heaven, and the power of Christianity be disparaged.

III. Pray for, and practice an holy dexterity, to divert from wicked or worldly talk, to more heavenly conversation. Methinks, it is a great pity, that professors should ever meet without some discourse of their meeting in heaven, or of the blessed ways that lead thereunto. Yet many times, worldly matters, speaking of others, or some more remarkable accidents and affairs abroad, speculative curiosities, ceremony, or other impertinencies, take up even from God's children, too much of many golden seasons, which might preciousely serve, by their mutual diving into the great mystery of godliness, and ways of Christianity, to increase amongst them spiritual warmth, and

resolution against all oppositions, and to build up one another in their most holy faith, acquaintance with temptations, comfortable walking with God. To confront this common mischief, come unto them prepared, as I advised before. But if the company be contrarily minded, and unaccustomed to the language of Canaan, interpose all thy wisdom, courage, authority, and eloquence, to draw them from their idle talk; and by a wise, plausible diversion, and modestly over-ruling transition, carry the current of their discourse all you can towards some good and spiritual end.

1. To which end, observe, and apprehend all opportunities and occurrences which may minister matter of digression into Divine discourse; and acquaint thyself with the art of abstracting sacred instructions from the book of the creatures and businesses in hand. It was the practice of our blessed Savior. Upon mention of bread, Matth. 16: he pressed upon his disciples to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees. • When he observed (John 6:) a number of people throng about him for miraculous bread, he digressed into a most heavenly discourse of the food of life. Upon occasion of drink being denied him by the Samaritan woman, (John 4:) he labored to allure her to the well-head of everlasting happiness,

2. Have ever in readiness some common heads of quickening motives to mind heavenly things: as the miserable condition of our natural state, the vanity and vexations of

all earthly things, the everlastingness of our state in another world, the sudden execution of God's fierce wrath upon some notorious ones, even in this life; especially those which are freshest in memory; the terrors of death, the dreadfulness of that last and great day drawing on apace. The mention of these things many times will strike full cold to the hearts of the most swaggering and sensual Belshazzars, and may, by God's blessing, prepare and soften them for remorse, and more heavenly impressions.

3. But, above all, get into thine own heart an habit of heavenly-mindedness, by much exercise, intercourse, and acquaintance with GOD, in pouring out thy soul before him, in renewing thy peace, and comfortable access unto him upon every check of conscience, in contemplation of the inexplicable sweetness, glory, and eternity of those mansions above; in diving into the secrets of his kingdom, by the help of humbleness and godly fear; by private employment of thy soul in solemn reflections; recounting with what variety of trains it was detained in the state of darkness; what delays and assaults it met with in its way to light; what terrors it passed through in the pangs of its new birth; the temptations incident to its infancy in grace, progress and growth in several graces, and the whole body of Christianity; relapses, desertions, their discoveries, recoveries, with all the means and circumstances: in a word, by a punctual observing how God deals with it every day, be, I say, thus blessedly busied at

home in thine own heart, and you shall find thyself more plentiful in holy discourse when you eomest abroad.

We are most apt to pour out ourselves in public according to our private contemplations. The conferences of free and unreserved spirits are ordinarily nothing else but the clothing of their ordinary heart-secrets with familiar forms of speech. Men, for the most part, speak most, and most willingly of those things they mind most. I advise thus in this point, that you may be habituated and encouraged in the art and exercise of putting forward good talk; or of diverting and drawing towards better, in case of the contrary. Otherwise, you shall never be able to hold out with constancy and courage, to cross many times the general mirth of the company, to put worldly wise men. out of their clement of earthly talk, to draw worldlings to hear of heavenly things.

VIII. Watch narrowly, with the eye of a tender con' science, and conduct with spiritual prudence, every action you undertakest, whether natural or civil, of mercy or of religion. To which particulars, before I descend, let me premise this principle concerning actions in general. In every one of thine actions, look that every concurrent be justifiable,.. that every ingredient be gracious. For instance

1. It must be good in its own nature, and warrantable out of the Word; by which all things must be sanctified unto thee; as a good servant will venture upon nothing but

what he knows will please his master. Otherwise, let the person be never so pleasing unto GOD, his intention never so good, his heart never so zealous, the means; circumstances,- and end never so excellent, yet all is nought.

2. The object, about which the action is exercised, must be qualified according to the rules of religion. Alms-deeds are acceptable sacrifices unto God: but, amongst other cautions, the parties that are to be made partakers thereof are to be singled out with discretion. 1. The true wants of a Christian should, in the first place, draw bounty from a truly charitable heart; according to that, Gal. 5: 10, "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." 2. In the next place, the lame, the blind, the sick, the aged, or any that God has made poor. 3. Any whosoever, in a case of true necessity, whatsoever the party has been before. But now, if you may choice of a sturdy beggar, an idle rogue, the shame and plague of this noble kingdom; you do not only deprive thyself of the comfort of a charitable deed; but encouragest an execrable irreligious paganism in such lazy drones, unprofitable burdens of the earth, and intolerable caterpillars of the common-wealth.

3. You must- also look unto the matter. For instance, the matter of thy bounty must be thine own goods, got law-

fully; otherwise it will prove, in respect of Divine allowance, but an abominable sacrifice.

4. The person must be acceptable unto God; otherwise his best deeds are but beautiful abominations. Services most sacred in their own nature, as prayer, hearing the Word, receiving the sacrament, are, from the altar of his unsanctified heart, but as the oaring of swine's blood. If you be not justified by faith, and accepted through CHRIST, all thy actions, natural, civil, religious, whatsoever is within thee, or without thee,—the use of the creatures, all thy courses and ways,—are turned into sins and pollutions.

5. The heart must, be sincere, else, even the noblest duties of religion are nothing. The Israelites' humiliation, seeking - GOD, returning, and inquiring early after him, were all but temporary and unsound, because their heart was not upright. "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 but flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him," Psal. lxxviii.

6. The means must be good, otherwise, be the end never so excellent,—let there be never so exact concurrence of all other causes,—yet the glory of the action is quite darkened to the man that employs any wicked means for

the achievement. Suppose that by a he thou.couldst save -a man's life, his soul, the souls of all the men upon the earth,—nay, win thereby unto God as much glory as accrues unto him by all creatures; yet for all this, on thy part, all were naught. For it is a sacred principle, sealed by truth itself, We must do no ill that good may come.

7. The circumstances must be seasonable. For in-stance: Private prayer is a precious service; but let it be seasonable for the circumstance of place, or else it may lose its sweet-smelling savour in the nostrils of God. The closet, or some retired place, is fit for this exercise; which the more secret, the more sincere. Meditation upon Divine mysteries is an excellent exercise, so it be confined to a fit time; but in the fervour of the preacher's pouring out his soul for us in prayer, it is sinful, because unseasonable. Calling to mind special passages formerly heard, or read, to press them with more life and power upon the conscience, is a right needful duty; but so to do at a sermon, or when we ought to bend our best attention to the present, is but one of SATAN's devices in the glory of an angel, to rob us of the comfort of the ordinance in hand.

8. The end also must be answerable in goodness; otherwise, let the whole affair be carried never so fairly in the eyes of men, yet with God it is no better than the cutting of a dog's neck. Jehu did noble service, by his resolute rooting out that bloody and idolatrous house of Ahab: and yet, for all this, all his outward glorious actions were

to God but as the killing of a man; because his eye was not upon the right end, God's glory. He principally aimed at the secure settling of the crown upon his own head, by an utter extinguishment of the king's family. If his aim had been right, his heart would have been as well set against the golden calves in Dan and Bethel, as his hand and sword against the idolatrous house of Baal.

Now I come to some particulars; and

I. First, Concerning visits. Ever before you go out of thy doors, upon any occasion, weigh well in the balance of holy wisdom, all circumstances, company, probability of all events and consequents on both sides; of staying at home, or going abroad; visiting this or that friend; undertaking that or the other business; and ever resolve that way which, in all likelihood, will bring most glory unto GOD, good unto others, and comfort unto thine own conscience. Let worldlings waste their time in those impertinent visits which have no other motive but a desire to be rid of time; no issue but temptation, and greater disability to good. But let every wisely-resolute Christian disdain to step over his threshold without a warrantable calling; aim at some probable good to come; honor to GOD, good unto our brethren; discharge of some duty of our calling, performance of Christian offices, of charity, humanity, mutual comforting, confirming, refreshing, and building up one another in our most holy faith. Otherwise he shall be in great danger of returning home far

worse than when he went out; laden both with more personal guilt and accessariness to others' sins; bleeding with some fresh bruise of conscience; failing in some Christian duties; grown into a further estrangement from God; or deeper sunk into some sensual conformities with this world.

Some actions, I confess, in their own nature are indifferent; but when clothed with circumstances, are not so; but necessarily become morally good, or evil, to the doer. And therefore the assertion of Catarinus, in the council of Trent, was consonant to Scripture. "Every particular action (said he,) is good or evil; neither is there to be found any one indifferent." (He meant in the actual existence; in the general there may.) It is so also in the present point of visiting.

Although the apostle, 1 Con 10: 27, in these words, "And ye be disposed to go," seems to intimate that it is not absolutely unlawful for a Christian, especially if invited, to visit an irreligious man; yet let none, who desires to preserve peace in his own bosom, presume hereupon to plunge himself into any unwarrantable engagements with worldly men. If any of God's children, therefore, at any time, be disposed to take any allowance from this place, to invite or visit enemies to the purity of religion, or power of godliness; let him cast his eye also upon those cases and cautions which may make it comfortable. They are such as these: 1. Their salvation. 2. Thy own

safety.

1. For the first, be sure to propose their spiritual good as at least thy principal end. But, unless we stand stoutly upon our guard, we are far likelier to be perverted by them, than they to be converted by us. And therefore, at such times, it concerns us much to collect all the powers of our souls, with special address and resolution, to vindicate, all we can, the truth and servants of God from all censure. Let us labor to bring as much wisdom and courage to confront and countermine, as the devil's proctors cunning and malice to undermine the kingdom of CHRIST. It is laudable for the physicians of the body to visit sometimes such patients as are infected with contagious diseases; if they arm themselves with preservatives, to prevent and repel the noisomeness of the air and noxious vapors. So it may not prove unseasonable for spiritual physicians to be drawn some-times, out of a desire of doing good, into the company of those who are over-run with the leprosy of sin; if they be fore-armed with prayer, premeditation, and watchfulness, to preserve their own souls from spiritual infection.

2. Secondly, as to thine own safety, see that thy heart be not conscious of slavish distrust, false fears, inattention to God's providence, reliance upon the arm of flesh; but that it approve, upon good ground, the present occasion, whether of invitation or visitation, as a means offered by God to mitigate the malice, and mollify the hearts of

those who might do thee a mischief. God's children should not, out of an austere retiredness, enrage unnecessarily the too much already alienated affections of the contrarily-minded; but so far as they may, without

a wound of conscience, or imputation of spiritual cowardliness, observe them with such common offices of humanity as may keep them, if not hearty friends, yet at least moderate enemies. But at such times, and in such company, you wilt have need to put on a great deal of courage and patience, wisdom and watchfulness; and warily decline two obvious errors and dangerous extremes, furious zeal, and faint-hearted silence.

3. Discover not such extreme weakness and baseness of mind, as to suffer the eye of thine heavenly spirit to be any whit dazzled with the glistening of outward glory, or to hunt, with fawning terror, the transitory favor of worldly greatness.

4. When you visitest others, or thyself invitest them, take notice before-hand, with as punctual survey as you can, of their humors, dispositions, opinions, and behaviors, and thereupon prepare convenient and seasonable matter, whereby you may apply thyself with all meekness of wisdom and patient discretion, to insinuate, argue, answer, reprove, reply, and so demean thyself in thy whole discourse, that neithe* the glory of GOD, the reputation of Christianity, or thine own conscience, may receive any wound. Would Christians hold this course, they would at

such times not so often depart with spiritual discontent, and so smitten with a consciousness of their silence, omissions, cowardliness, and unprofitableness in company.

II. Concerning natural actions, as eating, drinking, sleeping, I shall not say much. For were it not that, through the depravity of nature, we infatuate our reason with sensuality and wilful blindness, every man might be a rule unto himself this way. Hence that proverb, "Every man is either a fool or a physician." Either he has learned by experience, what seasons and proportions of such natural helps may be fittest for his constitution, or else he is most unworthy of that understanding soul which he bears in his bosom.

Concerning sleep also I have little to say: no certain measure can be prescribed. Only let Inc counsel Christians to take notice, that they may surfeit and sin in sleeping, as well as in eating and drinking. That it ought only, as other of God's good creatures, to serve the strengthening and refreshing of our bodies; and therefore they should beware, lest the great devourer of time bereave them of that flower and first fruits of the day; I mean, many golden hours in the morning; fittest for conversing with GOD, for examining our spiritual state, for offering up an acceptable sacrifice of prayer and praise, buckling fast unto us the Christian armor, and preparing to hold a

blessed communion with his holy Majesty all the day after. And let them often remember, when they see the sun up before them, that saying of St. Austin, “It is an uncomely thing for a Christian to have the sun-beams finding him in bed; and if the sun could speak, (says he,) it might say, I have labored more than You, yesterday, and yet I am risen, and you art still at rest.”

For conclusion, let me advise with as great earnestness as I can possibly all God’s children, that (as they prefer infinitely a pure heart, and that invaluable jewel, a peaceful conscience, before a world of gold,) they would watch over themselves with singular care in the use and enjoyment of things lawful. “For more (says a worthy divine,) perish by lawful things, than by unlawful courses.” Soft sands swallow up more ships than hard rocks split, Christians are in more danger of being spiritually undone by want of moderation in lawful things, than by the gross assault of foul sins.

III. Now concerning civil affairs, and dealings in the world, that you may keep thine heart and hands untainted,

1. Ever in all bargains, contracts, dealings, intercourse of any kind with others, follow that royal principle, Do as you wouldst be done by. Put thyself into the place of the party with whom you art to deal. Weigh well all the circumstances of the whole business; and then, returning to thyself, deal out to him that measure, in every particular,

which you wouldst be willing, upon good ground, to receive at the hands of another, if you went in his case. This is the sum of the law and the prophets for serving our brethren in love, “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.”

2. Let thy desire and delight never be fixed upon any earthly thing. To instance: Of all the civil affairs subject to human deliberation, there is none more important, or of greater consequence, either for extreme vexation, or ordinary contentment, than marriage. A word or two therefore, first, of convenient entrance into,—and, secondly, comfortable enjoyment of that honorable state.

For the first, 1. Let thy choice be in the Lord, according to St. Paul’s rule, Let piety be the first mover of thine affection, and then consider person, portion, and outward things only in a second place. The fear of GOD, as it is generally the foundation of human felicity, so must it especially be counted the ground of all comfort which man and wife desire to find in each other. There was never any gold or beauty which tied comfortably any marriage-knot. It is only the golden link of Christianity which has power to make so dear a bond lovely and everlasting; which can season and strengthen that inseparable society with true sweetness and immortality.

2. Warm thine heart with more special repose upon the party, as one with whom you can comfortably consort.

For the husband, all concurrents considered, ought to settle his affections upon his wife as the fittest that the world could have afforded him: and the wife should rest her heart upon her husband as the meetest for her that could have been found under the sun. By a constant intercourse of which mutual content in each other, the husband will be to the wife as “a covering of her eyes,” that she lift them not up upon any man; and the wife to the husband “the pleasure of his eyes,” that he may still look upon her with sober and singular delight.

Otherwise they will find but cold comfort in that commandment, Prov. 5: 18, 19, “Rejoice with the wife of thy youth: let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe and be you ravished always with her love.” without this mutual complacency, each in the other, I doubt whether I should encourage any to proceed.

3. In going about such an important business, apply to the throne of grace with extraordinary importunity and fervency of prayer. Wrestle with God in days of more secret and solemn humiliation for a blessing; and with sincerity heartily desire him, whatsoever thy expectations may be, yet if it be not to his glory, to dash it quite. A good wife is a more immediate gift of God than any other temporal blessing. “House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; but a prudent wife is from the Lord.” And therefore such a rare and precious jewel is to be sought for at God’s mercy-seat with extra-ordinary importunity.

And methinks, whatever good thing is procured at God's hand by prayer should bring with it, even in our sense and thankful acknowledgment, a thousand times more sweetness than that which is cast upon us by God's ordinary providence.

4. Let the parties deal plainly and faithfully one with the other, in respect of their bodies, souls, and outward state. I mean thus, that they should not deceive one the other by a concealment of any disease, special deformity, natural defect in body, or some secret crack in their outward state, for so they might bring a great deal of after misery. Therefore it were much better to disclose the one unto the other the material infirmities and wants, in either of their bodies or goods, though with hazard of missing the match; rather than that the one should obtain the other, with guile and after-discomfort. I said also in respect of their souls; by which I mean, that for the time of wooing only, as they call it, they should not put on a show of religion, when in deed and truth there is no such matter. For this execrable imposture also is sometimes villainously practiced, to the infinite prejudice of the deluded party. And not only some parties are, faulty this way but even Christian friends are often too forward, in giving testimonies.