

SERMON XII.

BY THE REV. THOMAS DOOLITTLE, A.M.

OF PEMBROKE HALL, CAMBRIDGE.

IF WE MUST AIM AT ASSURANCE, WHAT SHOULD THEY DO, THAT ARE NOT ABLE TO DISCERN THEIR OWN SPIRITUAL CONDITION ?

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God ; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.—1 John v. 13.

THE greatness of the mercy in having of the scripture, is manifested by the great advantages that the elect of God receive thereby ; namely, that they might be brought to close with Christ by faith unfeigned, and be partakers of eternal life through him ; (John xx. 31 ;) that bad men might be made good, and that good men might be made sure of an eternal blessed state in the life to come, whereby the Lord hath abundantly provided both for our happiness and our comfort : For OUR HAPPINESS, that we may have eternal life. For OUR COMFORT, that we may know we have eternal life. (1 John i. 4 ; Rom. xv. 4.) I cannot stay to view the context : I need not stay to explain the text. The case of conscience to be treated of from this scripture is this :—

Since men may know that they have eternal life, what must they do that cannot discern their spiritual condition ?

Here are two things to be performed :—

First. That we may know in this life, that we shall *certainly* be partakers of eternal glory in the life to come. For if assurance be not possible, I can neither blame you for wanting it, nor stir you up to labour after it.

Secondly. Lay down some rules for the getting of it, and directions, if by these rules we cannot for the present obtain it.

For the stating of the first part of the question, concerning the possibility of getting this certain knowledge of our future happiness, I shall lay before you these six positions :—

POSITIONS.

POSITION I. *An unregenerate person, while such, can have no assurance or certain knowledge of the eternal salvation of his immortal soul.* (John iii. 36 ; 1 John v. 10, 12.) Because, as such, he hath no actual interest in the promises of salvation, being without the conditions of faith and repentance, to which the promises are made, being a child of wrath, (Eph. ii. 3,) a slave to his lusts, (Titus iii. 3,) a captive to the devil, (2 Tim. ii. 26,) a rejecter of the Son of God. (John v. 40, 43 ; Mark xii. 10.) This man hath plague-sores, tokens of eternal death. I cannot say thou shalt be infallibly damned, because thou mayest repent and believe ; (2 Tim. ii. 25 ;) and thou canst not say thou shalt be

saved, because thou hast not yet repented for thy sin, nor believed on the Son of God. A wicked man is not *subjectum capax*, "a subject capable" of this assurance: "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. i. 13.) It is not the hard stone, but the soft wax, that receiveth the impression of the seal. If he hope for salvation while he liveth, and dieth in a natural condition, he shall lose his hope and soul together; (Job xi. 20; viii. 13, 14; xviii. 14;) this presumption will prove self-delusion, and end in desperation. He is worse than a Pharisee, (Luke xviii. 11,) whether he be a private person or a preacher, that liveth in gross sins, hating the power of godliness, and discouraging holiness, that yet blesseth God for election, justification, sanctification, and assured hope of glory.

POSIT. II. *That many of God's dear children for a long time might remain very doubtful as to their present and eternal condition, and know not what to conclude, whether they shall be damned, or whether they shall be saved.* (Psalm lxxvii. 1—10; lxxxviii. 4, 15, 16; Isai. l. 10.)

—There are believers of several growths in the church of God: fathers, young men, children, and babes: (1 John ii. 13, 14; 1 Peter ii. 2:) and as in most families there are more babes and children than grown men, so in the church of God there are more weak, doubting Christians than strong ones, grown up to a full assurance. A babe may be born, and yet not know it; so a man may be born again, and not be sure of it. Sometimes they think they have grounds of hope, that they shall be saved; sometimes they think they have grounds of fears, that they shall be condemned: not knowing which might be most weighty, like a pair of balances, they are in equal poise: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark." (Zech. xiv. 6.) It is spoken primarily of God's providential dispensations towards his church in gospel times: for a while she should live *in crepusculo*, "in twilight;" in a mixed condition of light and darkness, comfort and affliction; like a man in a misty morning, that neither walketh in the dark, nor yet hath the light clear to see far before him; like Paul and the mariners, that saw neither sun nor stars for many days; (Acts xxvii. 20;) so might it be with a particular person, in reference to his spiritual condition.

By this you see,

First. We make a difference betwixt saving faith, as such, and a full persuasion of the heart.

Secondly. That some of those that shall be certainly saved might not be certain that they shall be saved; for the promise is made to the grace of faith, and not to the evidence of it; to faith as true, and not as strong: they may be sure of heaven, and yet in their own sense not assured of heaven. As an infant may be born to a great estate, and have a certain title to it; but yet he might not know it, or make it out to himself or others. So that the question is not *de certitudine objecti*, "of the certainty of salvation," but *de certitudine subjecti*, "of the apprehension, sense, and knowledge of the believing person," concerning his salvation.

POSIT. III. *That a believer may not only in the general gather from*

the word of God, from the death of Christ, from the glorious preparation God hath made, that many shall be infallibly brought to glory, but also that he in particular shall be one of them. (Matt. viii. 11; xxv. 34; xi. 28; 1 Peter i. 4, 5.)—This must have its proof after: I therefore now pass on.

POSIT. IV. *That we are not to expect any voice from heaven, or God's sending of an angel, or extraordinary revelation, to make us to know that we do believe, or shall be saved; but to make use of those helps and means appointed by God, common to all believers, but yet sufficient for the obtaining of this particular assurance.*—This I put in, because the Papists grant it may be got by extraordinary revelation, but not else; as it is their wicked practice to keep the people most ignorant of those things of which they should have most knowledge, that, following them with an implicit faith and blind obedience, [they] might not scruple at their human traditions, and unwarrantable and many ridiculous innovations,* that have crept in amongst them, so they keep them most doubtful, where they should be most sure; and so the Council of Trent: † “If any man say that he knoweth he shall certainly persevere, or infallibly be assured of his election, except he have this by special revelation, let him be anathema.” A wicked council that anathematizeth a man for asserting that may be obtained which God commandeth him to get: “Make your calling and election sure.” (2 Peter i. 10.)

POSIT. V. *That such as have been filled with divine joy, through well-grounded apprehensions of their present grace and future glory, might lose that assurance, and that joy.* (Psalm xxx. 7; Canticles v. 6.)—And this may be, 1. From God acting, (1.) As a Sovereign Lord. (Job ix. 17.) (2.) As a wise God, putting a more eminent difference betwixt earth and heaven. (Psalm xiii. 1; 1 Cor. xiii. 12.) Or, 2. From the buffetings of Satan. Or, 3. From themselves, (1.) For the trial and exercise of some of their graces. (Job i. 1; xiii. 24; Isai. viii. 17.) Or, (2.) For correcting them for sin. (Isai. lix. 2.) As, (i.) For their backwardness to duty. (Canticles v. 2, 3, 6.) (ii.) Slothfulness in duty. (iii.) Frequent strong actings of pride in and after duty. (iv.) Letting down their spiritual watch; and so, (v.) Falling into some notorious transgression. (2 Sam. xi. 4; xiii. 15; Psalm li. 8, 12.) Or, (vi.) For not setting a due esteem upon the comforts of the Spirit. (Job xv. 11.) Or, (vii.) Insulting too much over weak believers; not exercising tender compassion to dejected, drooping Christians. (viii.) For their too much earthly-mindedness. (ix.) Not rising presently by repentance; (Isai. lvii. 17;) for these reasons and the like, their sun might be eclipsed, a winter of sorrows might follow their summer joys. They may lose their evidence, but not their adherence; and though there shall not be any interci-

* BELLARMINUS *De Baptismo*, tom. iii. lib. i. cap. 25—27, mentioneth twenty-two ceremonies about baptism, exorcism, salt, spittle, cross, unction, wax-taper lighted, in token that the baptized person is translated from the power of darkness unto light, &c. † *Si quis dixerit, hominem renatum et justificatum teneri ex fide ad credendum se certo esse, ex numero predestinatorum, anathema sit.*—*Concil. Trident. sess. vi. can. 15.* And again: *Si quis dixerit, magnum illud usque in finem perseverantiae donum se certo habiturum absoluta et infallibili certitudine, nisi hoc ex speciali revelatione didicerit, anathema sit.*—*Concil. Trident. sess. v. can. 16.*

sion of justification, yet there might be afterwards a non-apprehension of it.

POSIT. VI. *That in divers men, there are diverse degrees of this assurance, and in the same man different degrees at divers times; but in no man, at any time, in this life, perfection of degrees.*—For our understanding is imperfect, both as to the faculty and its acts. And though the mind is curing, yet it will not be perfectly cured in this life, from that darkness that befell it by man's apostasy from God. For we have but an imperfect knowledge of faith and love; and while we have but an imperfect knowledge of the premisses, we cannot give a perfect assent to the conclusion. And no man hath such perfection of degrees of the assurance of his salvation, *in an ordinary way*, as that one degree more cannot be added to the former; neither is there any repugnancy in asserting an infallible assurance, and denying a perfect assurance; for I infallibly know that there is a God, and that this God is good and just; and yet I have not a perfect knowledge of a Deity, or of his goodness and justice; for in this life we know but in part. (1 Cor. xiii. 11, 12.)

A THREEFOLD CERTAINTY.

There are three ways that we come to a certainty:—

1. *There is a certainty that comes by sense.*—Which cannot err about its proper object, when there is a due distance, a fit disposition of the organ, and the medium rightly disposed. Thus Thomas was certain of Christ's resurrection from the dead: "The other disciples said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." (John xx. 25, 27, 28.) Though the other disciples told him they had seen the Lord, yet he would not take it for a certainty from their report, except he had a certainty from his own sense. But the Papists do not only deny us a certainty of faith, but also a certainty of sense; for though in the sacrament we see it is real bread, and taste it to be real bread, and feel and handle it as real bread; yet, contrary to our sense, [they] would have us believe and say it is transubstantiated.

2. *There is a certainty of science*, or knowledge arising from first principles, received by all, that are proved by their own light, that cannot be demonstrated *a priori*, because there is nothing true before them; as, a man cannot show you the sun but by its own light: so, I certainly know, that both parts of a contradiction cannot be true; so, I certainly know, that the whole is greater than any particular part.

3. *There is a certainty of authority*, or testimony: if the testimony be human, it begets but a moral persuasion; for no human testimony is of necessary verity, because truth is not necessarily, but contingently and mutably, in the man that gives this testimony; and the testimony hath not its cogency or validity from itself, but from the qualifications of the

person that bears the testimony: whence there is a gradual certainty in human testimonies; only God is so necessarily true, that it should imply a contradiction that he should be God, and yet lie: God "cannot lie." (Titus i. 2.) So that a divine testimony begets a certainty of divine faith; for what God saith, I undoubtedly know to be true, because truth is essential to him; (Deut. xxxii. 4; xxxiv. 4; Heb. vi. 18;) for if truth be necessary to the testator, the truth of the testimony must necessarily be true; (John xvii. 17;) so I know that the impenitent, unbelieving person that dieth without grace, and an interest in Christ, shall certainly be damned, (Mark xvi. 16; Rom. ii. 4, 5; Heb. xii. 14,) because God hath said it, as if I saw him in his misery; and I know that the penitent, believing, self-denying, and sin-mortifying Christian shall be saved, (Matt. v. 8; Rom. viii. 13; Acts x. 43,) because God hath said it, as certainly as if I saw him actually possessed of it already.

When faith hath this divine testimony to lean upon, it ariseth in some by degrees to a full assurance. There are especially four words in the scripture, that set forth faith in its different degrees.

1. As it is said to be *ύποστασις*, *the substance, subsistence, existence of things*: (Heb. xi. 1:) looking upon things future, as certain as if they were present. Among the Hebrews there is usual a mutation of tenses, turning the future into the preter tense. Faith is the believer's *Pathach*, making things to come as certain to him as if he did already enjoy them; * and putteth a date upon the joys of the life to come, before he is possessed of them. Noah's faith assured him of the flood, as certainly as if it had then been when it was first foretold. (Heb. xi. 7.) 2. It is a *demonstration* of things not seen; faith seeth things that cannot be seen. That way of argumentation whereby error is confuted, by Aristotle is called *ελεγχος*,† the word here used; but here, for a *certain conviction* arising from divine authority, showing us such things which sense cannot perceive and reason cannot comprehend. When faith thus represents these glorious things to come thus unto the believing soul, then, 3. There is *πειθοησις*, a *good persuasion of the heart*, or a holy confidence; and from this persuasion there ariseth *παρρησια*, "an humble boldness," or liberty, and freedom of speech to God in prayer, which *de jure* all believers have. These words you have together, in Eph. iii. 12: "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." 4. And from these resulteth that desirable *ωληροφορια*, a *full assurance* of a future enjoyment of those things that faith presents unto us, and we are persuaded of our title to, and with liberty, freedom, and enlargedness of soul have prayed unto God for. So the question is not concerning all men, but believers; and not whether all believers have it, but may have it; not by revelation, but by

* *In lingua sacra Vau cum Pathach sequente Dagesh futurum in preteritum convertit, nam presens proprium Hebraei nullum habent.* "In the holy language, the letter *Vau*, with the point *Pathach* following *Dagesh*, changes the future into the preterite or past; for the Hebrews have no proper present tense."—EDIT. † *Ελεγχος εστι συλλογισμος της αντιφασεως.*—ARISTOTELES *De Reprehensione*, lib. i. cap. 8. And so used by the apostle, 2 Tim. iii. 16. The scripture is profitable *προς ελεγχον*, to convince the enemies of the truth: it signifieth "conviction," plain and evident. (John viii. 9; xvi. 8.)

ordinary means; not whether they always keep it; nor about perfect but certain infallible assurance in these words: thus,

THE QUESTION STATED.

A believer may, without extraordinary revelation, certainly know and be infallibly assured of eternal life.

I. ARGUMENT FROM SPECIAL GRACE.

And this will be made evident by the proof of these two propositions:—

1. *That a believer, without extraordinary revelation, might certainly know that he hath justifying faith, and unfeigned love to Christ, and that he is upright and sincere with God.*

2. *That there is an infallible connexion between these special graces and future glory.*

That a man may certainly know his sincerity, faith, and love, is evidenced by these particulars:—

FIRST PROPOSITION, WHICH SHOWETH THAT A MAN MIGHT KNOW HE HATH SAVING GRACE.

1. *God hath laid down in his word certain infallible γνωρισματα, "characters, signs, discoveries," of sincerity, justifying faith, and unfeigned love to God.*—Beside other topical heads, we may know it from the effects which it doth always produce; that where I see such an effect of faith, I know there is faith:* and Papists must make us cast away all logic, if we shall not have this granted. I see the broad clear light shining in mine eyes; therefore I know the sun is risen; and when we see any sign that is concomitant or consequent, inseparable and proper to the thing of which it is a sign, we know that that thing is. A man that is sick and weak, yet feels his heart to leap and pant; he knows he is a living man. A man that discourseth, and rationally inferreth one thing from another, knoweth that he hath a reasonable soul, and that he is a man. There are as certain characters, in the word of God, of sincerity, faith, and love, as there are plain injunctions that we should be sincere, believe, and love. Would God command a man to "examine himself whether he be in the faith," if there were not rules suitable and sufficient to direct us to know the nature of faith, and wherein it doth consist?

2. *God hath given to a man a power to understand, consider, deliberate, and reflect upon himself, and judge of himself and of his ways.*—Herein a man is above a brute:† a beast likes his pasture, but cannot know his propriety. Certainly, a man that is not a stranger to himself,

* *Posito effectu in esse, effectus ponitur causa.* "The effect being granted as actually existing, the cause of that effect is likewise granted."—EDIT. † *Ψυχη φωι λαμπεται, φ την αληθειαν ορα την παντων και την εν αυτη.*—MARC. ANTONINI *Meditationes*, lib. xi. sec. 12. Edit. Cant. "When the superficies of the soul is thus even, the light plays better upon her: she reflects a light which discovers the truth in other objects, and that within herself."—JER. COLLIER'S and GRAVES'S Translations. *Τα ιδια της λογικης ψυχης εαυτην ορα, εαυτην διαβροοι, εαυτην οποιαν αν βουληται ποιει.*—*Idem*, *ibid.* sec. 1. "The privileges of the rational soul are these: it contemplates itself; it regulates itself; and renders itself such as it wishes to be."—GRAVES'S Translation.

but a diligent observer of the actings of his soul, might know what they are, yea, and discern the moral modifications of those acts. For conscience is privy to the principle and spring of all our actings, to the manner and the end. If I love a man, by reflecting upon myself I know I love him; and shall this noble power of the soul be only useless in the greatest concernments of my soul? Can I know what I approve, esteem most, and delight in most, and breathe, and pant after most in other things, and not in this? It is true, conscience is naturally blind in spiritual things; but yet, directed by the word, and enlightened by the Spirit, [it] might pass a judgment upon a man. For as the moon borroweth light from the sun, and so communicateth light unto the world, which else it could not do; so conscience, receiving light from the word and Spirit, discovereth what else it could not do. So it is called the "candle of the Lord:" "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly:" (Prov. xx. 27 :) not only taking notice of the outward acts in the life, but the inward motions of the heart; not only of some, but it hath a power to take cognizance of them all. Conscience is like the urine which discovereth whether a person be sound in health, or shows what his distemper is. By the echo caused by the reflection of the sound, a man heareth his word after he hath spoken it; so by the reflecting power of conscience a man views his actions after they are done, and hears his words after they be spoken. A man sees his spots or beauty in the glass, by the reflection of the species,* that do represent them to his view. As Joseph's brethren's consciences told them that they were true men, and not spies; (Gen. xli. 31;) so conscience may truly tell a man, that he is sincere, and not an hypocrite. Thus conscience is said to be a witness: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost;" (Rom. ix. 1;) to accuse and to excuse. (Rom. ii. 15.) So it is a judge, condemning or acquitting, according as a man's state is found to be. So much Heathens have spoken of conscience.†

Unfeigned willingness to part with and mortify every sin, a sure sign of saving grace.

Now, that the scripture containeth characters of sincerity, and that a man comparing himself by those characters might certainly know that he is sincere, will be evidenced by these scriptures: "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then" (mark, "then") "shall I be upright." (Psalm xix. 13.) When there is no one known sin but a man is really willing should be mortified and parted with, his most beloved sin that is nearest to him, which, by way of propriety, he may call his own, in an especial manner, which is the last sin a man parteth with; and if there be any sin which a man is unwilling to part with, and will keep a man off from Christ, it is his

* In the old signification of *image, likeness, outward appearance, or show*.—EDIT.

† Το συνειδος αυτο εστι δικαστης ο δικαιος, αμα και οικειοτατος.—HIEROCLIS *Comment. in Pythagor. Carmina*. "Conscience itself is of all judges the most equitable and unbiassed; and, besides, it is one that we always have most intimately near us, and that need not be sought for at a distance."—EDIT.

bosom sin, his darling ; and the truth is, that if any man keep [and] love any one sin, which he will not let go to close fully with Christ, let his profession be never so great, he is an hypocrite. Some men part with Christ for one lust, for one sin. "When Jesus heard these things," how far he had gone, how much he had done, "he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing." (Luke xviii. 22.) Love to his riches, and prizing them more than Christ, was his ruin ; one stab at the heart with a pen-knife will as certainly kill a man as a thousand wounds with a sword ; one disease that is mortal will as certainly bring a man to his grave as twenty ; and one leak in a ship will sink it, as well as more. Herod did many things ; but yet he would not let go his Herodias. (Mark vi. 17—20.) It is a sure rule, that which a man loves most, he will endeavour to keep longest : "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." A man prizeth his right hand much, but his head more ; and therefore, to save his head, he will hold up his hand, and venture the loss of the one, to save the other. There may be many sins [which] a man might love, but one especially ; and he may be willing the other should be pared off to preserve that ; but when he is willing to leave all, to indulge himself in none, no, not his darling sin, it is a sign of sincerity. Consult these scriptures : Psalm xvii. 1, 3, 4 ; cxix. 1—3, 6 ; Job i. 8 ; ii. 3 ; xxxi. throughout.

A man may know whether he be thus willing to part with sin.

Now, a man may, by diligent inquiry, find out his beloved sin, and he may know, and his conscience may bear him witness, of his willingness to part with this, to have it subdued, and that by the grace of God he doth keep himself from it, that it bears not rule nor dominion in his soul : "I was also upright before him." (Psalm xviii. 23.) How doth David manifest this ? By the observation of his heart and ways in this particular ; for it followeth : "And I kept myself from mine iniquity." There is as much power of God required, and strength of grace, to make a man part with his beloved sin as all the rest. Thus Hezekiah knew his sincerity. He had the testimony of his conscience, and was sure of it ; else how could he have made his appeal to God ?—"Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." (Isai. xxxviii. 3.)

True faith might be discovered in us.

Likewise, that a man might certainly know he hath justifying faith, is proved from 2 Cor. xiii. 5 : "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates ?" Doth God so strictly charge us to know that which cannot be known ? That that faith here spoken of, that we must inquire after, is a justifying faith, appears from the text.

1. By this Christ dwelleth in us, and so not by any other faith.

2. Because without this faith we are *αδοκιμοι*, "reprobates," not as opposed to the elect, but denoting persons unsound and hypocritical.

It is also not a conjecture, but a certain knowledge, that we are pressed to obtain, by the word that the Holy Ghost useth, *πειραζετε*, "search, make trial," as God tried Abraham, (Gen. xxii. 1,) that his love to God, and fear of God, appeared. *δοκιμαζετε*, "prove" as the goldsmith doth his metals, in the fire, or by the touchstone; because he bids us prove it not so much by argument, as experience; for so the word is used, Luke xiv. 19. He went *δοκιμασαι* "to prove" his oxen: and forasmuch as we must prove ourselves to be in Christ, we must not leave it uncertain; for what is uncertain after trial, is not proved.

A note of true faith.

Besides, that we do believe, we might know by the judgment's valuing, the will's choosing, and the affection's loving Christ above all. "Unto you that believe he is precious;" (1 Peter ii. 7;) Christ is an honour to the believer, and Christ is most prized and valued by the believer: * and cannot a man know what he prizeth most? what he valueth and esteemeth most? what his understanding doth dictate to him to be chosen above all? and whether his will doth choose according to the dictates of the understanding? and the affections, love, and desire are upon the wing to enjoy what the will doth make choice of? and grief filleth the heart when he cannot obtain it? Could not Ahab know that he prized Naboth's vineyard, when he grieved because he could not get it? and all that he had was lessened by the want of what he prized so much? So doth the soul cry out, "Riches are nothing without Christ;" and honour and friends cannot remove the grief of his heart, till Christ comes into his heart, and manifests himself there. Cannot he know it by his care to get, by his fear to lose, by his determining what to do in case he must lose, that which he prizeth most, or all other things besides? He will part with all, though very desirable, as a mariner will cast away his richest goods in a tempest, to save his life: † which think you doth he prize most? A woman, if her house be on fire, suffers all her pewter to be consumed in the flames, so that she may but save her child: is it not apparent which she valueth most? All shall go, that thou mayest keep Christ, if thou prize him most. This is known by the delight of the heart in the enjoyment of that which a man valueth most in the want of other things. Thou canst delight in Christ, in poverty, affliction, in the midst of troubles in the world.

So, likewise, for love: is it not possible for a man to know that he loveth Christ above all? How else could Peter, when asked three times by Christ whether he loved him, answer three times, that he did love him, and did appeal to Christ, that knew his heart, that he spake truly, because he knew he loved him sincerely; and this is observable that this was after Peter's fall, by which he had learned to have a holy jealousy over his own heart; and Christ doth not intimate any deceitfulness in his heart in this, as he did before when he said twice that he would not deny him. (Matt. xxvi. 33, 35.)

* *Τμη* for *εντιμος*.—PISCATOR in loc. † As Aristippus cast his gold into the sea, saying, *Satius est, ut hæc per Aristippum, quam propter hæc perat Aristippus*, "It is better these things perish by Aristippus, than Aristippus by these things."

Signs of true love to God.

By the effects of love, we may certainly know that we love him.

1. *By thy unfeigned desires to be like unto him.*—We love to imitate those whom we dearly love. Love produceth assimilation: if he be holy, so wouldst thou be; if he hate sin, so dost thou.

2. *By thy hearty desire to be united to him, to have him with thee.**—His presence thou dost desire, his absence thou canst not bear without mourning and complaints, and wishing, “O that I could see him! O that I could meet with him!” And therefore thou goest from duty to duty, from ordinance to ordinance, from thy prayers in thy closet to the congregation, if thou mightest find him there; from the word to the sacrament, if thou mightest find him there: if he come unto thee, thou rejoicest; if he withdraw himself, thy soul is troubled.

3. *By thy great care to please him, fear to offend him, and resigning thyself to him.†*—When it grieveth thy heart to grieve thy Lord, and it breaks thy heart when thou breakest his commands: “If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” (John xiv. 15, 21.) “And hereby we do know that we know” (including this affection of love unto) “him. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby we know that we are in him.” (1 John ii. 3—5.) “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous,” (1 John v. 3,) because of the love we have to him that doth command.

4. *By the love that we bear unto his image, in whomsoever we do see it, and love them that are like to Christ so much, that we could deny ourselves of honours and profits, were it necessary, and God should call us to it, to do them good.‡* As we love Christ above all, so we love his likeness in others, and the believer for Christ's sake above outward things, that if he be in necessity, we do not only wish him well, but part with something; and if God and the law of nature did not require us to lay it out first for necessary provision for our families, could part with all to help them in their great necessity. (Acts iv. 32, 34, 35, 37; 1 John iii. 16, 17.) Now, this sincere love to the people of God is an evidence of the goodness of our spiritual condition: “We know that we are passed from death unto life.” How? not by extraordinary revelation, but by this rational argumentation: “Because we love the brethren;” (1 John iii. 14;) and, verses 18, 19: “My little children let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

* *Nihil magis gregale quam amor; omnium rerum patientissimus, nisi solitudinis, societate gaudet et extorquet consortem.*—JOHAN. EUST. NIEREMBERGIUS, *De Arte Vol.*, p. 333. “Nothing is more social and gregarious in its nature than love. Possessing the most extraordinary powers of enduring all things except solitude and absence, it delights in the society of the object beloved, and claims for itself a companion with whom it may associate.”—EDIT. † *Se a se auferet amans, et amato tradit.* “He that loves, withdraws himself from himself, and delivers himself up to the object beloved.”—EDIT. ‡ *Amor echo.* The soul that loves God, doth echo to God's commands: “When thou saidest—my heart said,” &c. (Psalm xxvii. 8.)

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

The Papist cavils, the drooping Christian doubts.

But here the Papist doth not only cavil, but the drooping, distressed Christian also questioneth all this, because of the deceitfulness of the heart. "Alas! the scripture tells us, that 'the heart' of man 'is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?' (Jer. xvii. 9 :) and if the heart of man cannot be known, how can we say we believe or love God?" For this, consider these four things:—

1. Another man cannot know it; I cannot certainly and infallibly know whether another man be sincere, or what his heart is; for it is the prerogative and excellency of God to be καρδιογνωστης, "one that knows the hearts of all men." (Acts i. 24.)

2. A wicked man's heart is so wicked, and there is such a depth of wickedness in his heart, that he cannot come to the bottom of it.

3. If a man cannot know all the secret turnings and windings of his heart, yet he may know the general scope and frame of his heart.

4. If he could not do this of himself, yet, assisted by the Spirit of God, which all believers have received, he might know the frame, bent, scope, inclination, of his own heart.

Thus far the first proposition, that a man may know that he hath sincere faith in Christ, and love to God. Now we proceed to the second.

SECOND PROPOSITION, WHICH SHOWS THE CONNEXION BETWEEN
GRACE AND GLORY.

[The] second proposition is this: *That there is an infallible connexion between justifying faith, unfeigned love, and eternal glory.*

The apostle tells us of some things that may be called εχομενα σωτηριας, "things that accompany salvation," (Heb. vi. 9,) having or containing salvation, that are so contiguous to salvation that the one toucheth the other. This must be proved; for, else, though I know I do believe and love God sincerely to-day, I can have no infallible assurance of salvation, because this may be lost before to-morrow, or before I die. Now this I shall endeavour to prove by these three following particulars:—

1. *From the verity of God's promises.*

1. *The undoubted verity of God's promises proveth an inseparable connexion between sincere grace and eternal glory.*—Faith is the eye of the soul, and with it, through a promise, as through a perspective glass, can the soul have a view of heaven and glory. What greater certainty or security can a man have, than the infallible promise of that God who is Truth itself? who will not deny his word; but the same love and free grace that moved him to infuse grace into thy heart, and to make the promise, will move him also to give the thing promised: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) "He that believeth hath everlasting life." (John v. 24.) He hath it in the

promise, he hath it in the first-fruits. "But ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit." (Rom. viii. 23.) The Jews, by offering their first-fruits, did testify their thankfulness to God for what they had received, and hopes of the full crop in due time. He "hath everlasting life;" then it must not end. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 16.) As certainly as the unbeliever shall be cast into utter darkness, so certainly shall the believer be partaker of the glorious inheritance of the saints in light. The promise is as true as the threatening. There, (Acts xvi. 30, 31,) you see a poor convinced, wounded sinner, under the load of guilt, that had a sight of his lost, undone, deplorable condition, coming to the apostles, and speaking after this manner: "Ye men of God, ye servants of the Lord, if there be any way for me, who have been so great a sinner, that have done enough, ten thousand times over, to damn my own soul; if there be any certain way to avoid damnation, I beseech you tell me; if there be any means by which I might certainly be saved, as you pity my sinful soul, my bleeding heart, my wounded conscience, tell me what it is, declare it to me!" What is the apostle's answer? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The apostle speaks not doubtingly, "*Perhaps* thou shalt be saved, perhaps thou mayest be damned." "If thou get faith *it may be* thou mayest get to heaven," Alas! what relief, peace, satisfaction would this have been to his wounded conscience? But they speak peremptorily: "Believe, and thou *shalt* be saved." So that prove thou that thou hast faith, and these scriptures prove thou shalt have salvation.

The connexion, therefore, will not be questioned: "If I believe, I shall be saved." This God hath promised. But shall not a believer lose his faith in Christ, and lose his love to God? for the Remonstrants grant that a believer *qua talis*, "as a believer," cannot fall away, nor come short of glory; but *qui talis est*, "he that is a believer" may fall away totally and finally, and so cannot have assurance of salvation, because he hath no assurance that he shall persevere in his believing and state of grace. To this I oppose these places of scripture: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless"—(therefore preserved from apostasy, which is exceedingly blameworthy) till when?—"unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Is this a prayer, and not a promise? Yea, it is a prayer indited by the Spirit of God, and hath a promise following it, if you will read on: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (1 Thess. v. 23, 24.) Here the apostle, that had the Spirit, prayeth for perseverance; and the apostle, that had the Spirit, promiseth perseverance. Certainty, then, of perseverance doth not make men careless in the use of means, nor prayers needless; by praying, a man obtains the thing promised; and the certainty that he hath by the promise of obtaining, puts life into his prayers: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it," *επιτελεσει*, "will finish it, will perfect it," "until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i. 6.) *Φρουρουμενους*, "kept," garrisoned,* "by

* *Φρουρησθαι* denoteth more safety than *φυλαττεσθαι*.

the power of God through faith unto salvation." (1 Peter i. 5; John x. 28—30.) "But will with the temptation make a way to escape." (1 Cor. x. 13.) Therefore they shall persevere; for to enable the believer to persevere in all temptations, is to make a way to escape the destruction and hurt the temptation tendeth to. God doth promise this absolutely: "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. xxxii. 38, 40.) They shall not forsake God, because God will not leave them. "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 27.) As absolute as was the covenant with Noah, that he would not drown the world. Besides, as God doth make conditional promises of pardon and salvation to those that believe and repent, so he doth promise to give the condition. (Isai. liv. 9, 10.) And herein is one special difference betwixt the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace; for God promised happiness to man under the covenant of works, if he persevered in yielding perfect obedience, but did not promise to keep him from departing from him. (Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.) So that a conditional promise is sufficient security, where the condition is certain, and doth not infer the uncertainty of the promise, but where the condition is doubtful. These places also prove the constancy of grace, that it shall not be lost. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;" doth not make a trade of sin, cannot sin so as by sin totally and finally to fall; "for his seed remaineth in him."* (1 John iii. 9.) While the Papists and Arminians have endeavoured to bite asunder the golden chain, whereby grace and glory are linked together, this place of scripture hath broken their teeth. Bellarmine acknowledgeth that this is the hardest place of scripture for him to answer, in all the book of God.† In John iv. 14, it is set forth by "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." A believer is "born of incorruptible seed." (1 Peter i. 23.) An hypocrite, like a stake, hath no root, and therefore may be plucked up; but a real believer hath grace rooted in him, and therefore, like a tree rooted in the earth, stands fast.

If it be objected, "No man can certainly be assured of salvation, because God hath no where made a particular promise to any person by name; and nothing is to be believed with a divine faith but what is expressly contained in the word of God. He hath not said, 'Thou, Cornelius, shalt be saved:'"—

To this is answered, that all particulars are contained under the universals. If all men be rational creatures, and Cornelius be a man, we must conclude that Cornelius is a rational creature. How will they prove that there is an infallible certainty, that every particular person shall come to judgment? For God hath not said, "And thou, Cornelius, shalt come to judgment." In the commands that are given to all men,

* *Ἀμαρτιῶν ποτεῖν differt ab ἀμαρτανεῖν simpliciter accepto.* "To commit sin differs from sinning in its simple acceptation."—EDIT.
 † BELLARMINUS *De Justificat.* tom. iv. lib. iii. c. 15.

that they shall not commit adultery; how will they prove that this reaches every particular man? for where hath God said, "Thou, Cornelius, shalt not commit adultery?" Thus this is proved from the infallibility of God's promises.

2. From the prevalency of Christ's prayers.

2. *The prevalency of Christ's intercession for those that do believe and love God, doth demonstrate the inseparable connexion between grace and glory.*—For we know, that what Christ prayed for shall be granted. "And I know that thou hearest me always." (John xi. 42.) Arminius layeth it down as "a certain truth, that Christ's prayers are never rejected." * Now Christ's prayers for believers are not conditional: "Father, if their faith fail not, let them be saved;" but Christ prayeth, that their faith might not fail, and that they may be saved. Christ's intercession doth not exclude the conditions of faith and perseverance, but is, that we may believe, persevere, and so infallibly be saved. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." (Luke xxii. 32.) And Arminians grant this prayer of Christ to be absolute, praying not for Peter's salvation if he should persevere, but praying that he may persevere. Neither is this prayer peculiar for Peter, excluding the rest; for though he mentioneth Peter, yet he speaketh to all, and of them all: "Simon, Σίμων, Satan ἐξήγησάτο ὑμᾶς, hath desired you, that he may sift you as wheat;" and when he should be recovered from his fall, he should strengthen his brethren: whereby it is manifest, that Christ had respect unto the perseverance of the rest, as well as to Peter's. And the like intercession Christ makes for all that should believe, as appeareth from John xvii.; which was not a prayer only suitable to the condition, and cases, and exigencies of the apostles at that time, but a pattern of his interceding now in heaven. So much Arminius grants.† "I pray that thou wouldest keep them from the evil;" (John xvii. 15;) therefore from apostasy, by the greatest evil. Not that they should be free from persecution, but from being overcome by persecution, that it may not separate them from him: ἀπο τοῦ πονηροῦ the article shows "the evil" to be specially sin and Satan. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." (Verse 20.) And he prayeth for their glorification: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am;" (Christ then, as to his divine nature, was in heaven, a proof that he was God;) "that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." (Verse 24.)

* *Certò certius concludere nobis licet, Christi preces nunquam rejectum iri.*—ARMINII *Oratio De Sacerdotio Christi*, p. 17. † *Continet illud caput 17 Joh. perpetuum canonem precum et intercessionis, quas Christus Patri offert in cælis: quanquam enim Christus adhuc in terrâ existens illam precationem recitaverit, tamen ad statum illius sublimem in cælis pertinet propriè; et describi voluit, ut perpetuò nobis esset in terris solatio.*—ARMINII *Oratio De Sacerdotio Christi*, p. 17. "The seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel contains the perpetual rule, the exact canon, of the prayers and intercessions which Christ offers in heaven to his Father. For although that prayer was recited by Christ, while he remained upon earth, yet it properly belongs to his sublime state of exaltation in heaven: and it was his will, that it should be written and described in his word, that we who are on earth may derive from it continual consolation."—EDIT.

3. *From the inability of all things to separate betwixt Christ and a believer.*

3. *The inability of all things that may set themselves to make a breach and separation between God and the gracious soul, doth demonstrate an inseparable connexion between grace and glory.*—Famous is that place to this purpose, in Rom. viii. 35, 37—39; where the question is propounded by the apostle, whether any thing shall separate betwixt God and his people, and hinder their salvation. And the apostle saith, “No:” where observe these particulars:—

First. The interrogation: “Who shall separate?” that is, none shall. For thus an interrogation is a strong negation.* (Matt. xxiii. 33; Heb. ii. 3.)

Secondly. Here is a particular application of this to individual persons; not only believers, or elect in general. “Who shall separate us?”

Thirdly. A particular enumeration of those evils that might threaten this separation: “tribulation, persecution,” &c. And whereas some assert their own wills may be the cause of their apostasy, and that not mentioned in the text; “It is not said, their own wills shall not separate them;” I answer, It is included, when it is said, “no other creature,” except they will exempt men’s will from the creation.

Fourthly. His glorying and triumphing over all these, *ὑπερβικωμεν*, “more than conquerors;” “over-overcome.”

Fifthly. In whose strength it is that we are enabled to keep our steadfastness, that maketh it the more certain: in the strength of Christ, and not our own.

Sixthly. His confidence, (and he had the Spirit of God,) *ωπεισμαι*, “I am persuaded;” though sometimes it signifies no more than a moral persuasion or probable conjecture, yet it doth not exclude a certainty of knowledge. “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself;” (Rom. xiv. 14;) that is, *I certainly know*: it must therefore be judged by the circumstances of the text.

Seventhly. It is not said only, they “shall not separate,” but that they “cannot separate us from the love of God.” Whether “love” be taken actively or passively, for the love wherewith we love God, or the love wherewith we are beloved by God, is not now material: it is true of both. The sum of this might be gathered up in this syllogism:—Those that may certainly know that they do sincerely believe and love God, may certainly know that they shall be saved: But a real believer may certainly know that he doth sincerely believe and love God: Therefore, he may certainly know that he shall be saved.

Thus far of the first argument from our graces, and the infallible connexion between them and glory. Because I may be judged to be too long in this, I will be shorter in the rest, that I may come to the second part of the question.

* *Interrogatio negantis.*

II. ARGUMENT FROM THE INHABITATION OF THE SPIRIT.

II. *A believer may know that he shall be saved, because he may know he hath the Spirit of God dwelling in him.*—The indwelling of the Spirit is proper and peculiar to believers; for the world cannot receive him. (John xiv. 17.) That they have the Spirit,—they may know by the special effects which he produceth in that heart where he dwells, by his convincing, humbling, sanctifying work; (1 Cor. vi. 11;) by enabling them to make progress in their sanctification; (2 Cor. iii. 18;) by his special assistance vouchsafed to them in holy prayer, with sighs and groans which cannot be uttered; (Rom. viii. 26, 27;) by enabling them to mortify their sins more and more. (Rom. viii. 13.)

Now, by all these effects, the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the heart of a believer being manifested, it doth assure him of three things:—

First. By the inhabitation of the Spirit, he may know his eternal election. “Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit.” (2 Thess. ii. 13.)

Secondly. By this we may be sure of our adoption. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Gal. iv. 6.)

Thirdly. By the Spirit dwelling in us, we may be sure of eternal salvation: “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” (Eph. i. 13, 14.) In which text there are two words that are to be considered: *Εσφραγισθητε Ἀρράδων*. The Spirit is a seal: it is an earnest. 1. A seal among men is, (1.) For secrecy. (2.) For distinction. (3.) For authority. (4.) For certainty. A writing sealed is authentic, and for insuring. 2. It is “an earnest;” so also called, 2 Cor. i. 22; a metaphor taken from buyers and sellers. An earnest among men is part of payment; and though it be but small, yet it is sufficient to secure you of that which is of very great value.* Though there be no commutative justice betwixt God and the creature, yet here it hath its weight. There is this difference betwixt an earnest and a pawn: a pawn might be fetched from his hands to whom it was committed to keep; but an earnest binds a man to stand to his agreement, or at least he must lose his “earnest.” But God will give the whole inheritance, and will not lose his “earnest.”

For our greater comfort, we may take notice of these particulars in this text, and 2 Cor. i. 21, 22, compared together: 1. The person sealing: “The Father.” 2. In whom: “In Christ.” 3. With what seal: “The Spirit of promise:” where are all the Persons in the Trinity making us sure of our inheritance. 4. When: “After ye believed.” 5. The end, *subordinate*, the certainty of our salvation, a seal, “an

* *Ἀρράδων peculiariter dicitur pars aliqua persoluta pretii in venditione intervenientis, ut fides fiat reliquæ persolvendæ summæ.*—BEZA. “The word EARNEST is peculiarly applied to that part of the price of any thing which, in the course of bargaining, is agreed to be deposited, as a security that the rest of the sum will be paid at the stipulated time.”—EDIT.

268 SERMON XII. WHAT SHALL THEY DO THAT ARE NOT ABLE earnest :” *ultimate*, “the praise of his glory.” 6. How long this seal and earnest shall thus assure us? And that is, till we have the complete possession of what it is “an earnest.”

III. ARGUMENT FROM INSTANCES, AB ESSE AD POSSE VALET CONSEQUENTIA.*

III. *Many have without extraordinary revelation obtained a certain knowledge, that they should be saved. Therefore it is possible : that which hath been done is not impossible.*—“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.) This certainty the apostle gathers from his sincerity and constancy in his obedience and faith, and declareth the same certainty that all those have, that know “they love his appearing :” “Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.” (Heb. x. 34.) *Par parium est ratio, et par affirmatio.*†

IV. ARGUMENT, NEMO TENETUR AD IMPOSSIBILE.‡

IV. *God commands us to make our calling and election sure ; therefore it is possible.*—God’s commands are not evidences of our ability, but yet are of the possibility of the duty that he commands. They do not tell us what we by our own strength can do ; but yet they declare what by our diligence and God’s assistance may be done. (2 Peter i. 10.) And if we can make our election sure, (not in itself, for so it is, 2 Tim. ii. 19, but to ourselves,) we may be sure of salvation. “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” (Rom. viii. 30.)

V. ARGUMENT.

V. *The Papists grant a certainty of hope, therefore we may have a certainty of faith.*—For by faith we must first apprehend the object, before we can hope for it ; § and according to the measure, degrees, and strength of our faith, is our hope. He that hath but a weak faith cannot have a strong hope. If Abraham had staggered in his faith, he had not been steadfast in his hope. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope.” (Rom. xv. 13.) So much for the possibility of this assurance.

SECOND PART OF THE CASE.

Now I come to the second part of the question, *to speak to those that know not that they have eternal life, and discern not their spiritual condition.* And those may be of two sorts :—

* “In reasoning from that which actually is, to that which is possible, the consequence is valid.”—EDIT. † “The same reason exists for things in similar circumstances, and the same affirmation may be made concerning each of them.”—EDIT.

‡ “No man is bound to that which is impossible.”—EDIT. § Πληροφορία της ελπίδος, [“the full assurance of hope,”] in Heb. vi. 11, supposeth πληροφοριαν της πιστεως, [“the full assurance of faith,”] in Heb. x. 22.

I. *Some that, for want of diligence in the use of means, are uncertain what their condition is.*

II. *Such as have made inquiry, and long earnestly to be resolved in this great question, whether they be converted, changed, and shall be saved, or no, and yet cannot find it out.*

I. I would speak a few things to the first of these, because the greatest part know not their condition through their own carelessness and negligence; that, through the slothfulness of their own hearts, or the difficulty of the work, or multiplicity of worldly care and business, are yet in the dark, that examine their shop-book oftener and more diligently than they do the book of their own hearts; that make oftener inquiry whether they grow rich, than whether they wax good. If I may judge of other men's hearts by mine own in this point, and not be thought to have too hard and uncharitable thoughts of them, I would conclude we are all guilty of negligence in this case, and therefore walk in the dark, and remain in uncertainties about the salvation of our immortal souls; which should be the first thing we should make sure of, because it is of the greatest and everlasting concernment. Ah Christian! chide thy own slothful, lazy, negligent heart; shame thyself out of this carelessness. What! canst thou eat, and drink, and sleep, and trade as quietly as if thou wert past all danger? And yet thou dost not know whether thou shalt be damned or saved! Awake, O my soul! Rouse up thyself, and look after thine eternal state. It is no matter whether thou art rich or poor, honourable or contemptible; the great question, that with the greatest seriousness is to be resolved, is, whether thou hast grace or no, whether Christ be thine or no. Certainly careless persons should be stirred up to look after their eternal state; and those that are diligent need some considerations to make them more diligent; and therefore the apostle Peter writeth to those that had obtained like precious faith with himself, calling upon them, urging and exhorting them, to make their calling and election sure. (2 Peter i. 10.) For this end let me propound these following questions to thee that art negligent in this great concernment, and, as thou readest, give thyself a sober, serious answer.

EIGHT QUESTIONS PROPOUNDED TO SLOTHFUL CHRISTIANS.

1. *Is it nothing to thee, to live in the daily neglect of a commanded duty?*—Is it not the injunction of thy Lord, whose servant thou dost profess thyself to be, that thou shouldst give all diligence in this matter, and wilt thou not give any at all, or not at all proportionable to the weightiness of thy concernment herein? Might not this raise doubts and jealousies in thy soul, that thy condition is not good, because thou art not diligent to know and to prove it to be good? especially when thou dost consider that thy Lord commands thy diligence herein. Mightest not thou question the sincerity of thy obedience to any of God's commands, for want of the universality of it, extending itself to all God's commands? Tell me, Christian, why hath God given us this charge? Read 2 Peter i. 10: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Is it not the same God that commands thee to pray, that commands thee to make sure of

heaven? Didst thou never read these words? or hast thou read them, and thrown them by, and thought, "This counsel is not fit to be followed, nor this command to be obeyed?" What canst thou say for thy neglect? Look a little into the text, what is it that you are commanded to make sure of? house or land? If it had been so, it is like thou wouldest have obeyed; but it is something better, infinitely better,—whether thou art effectually called, and eternally elected; and is this to be done slothfully, carelessly? or doth not God require thy diligence, (*Σπουδασατε*,) thy utmost diligence; nay, all thy diligence; nay, thy speedy diligence, without delay; thy painful diligence, without indulging thyself in thy sloth; thy continual diligence, without weariness, or till thou hadst got a certainty of thy state? And shouldst thou not do this, rather than any temporal concernment? Shouldst thou not make sure of grace, rather than of riches; of heaven, rather than the earth; of an interest in God, rather than of earthly possessions?

2. *Is it not a shame that wicked men should daily use more care to make sure of fading vanities, than thou dost to make sure of better and more lasting riches?**—What! is not the soul better than the body? Or are things temporal better worth than things eternal? How do they cark and care! "What must we eat, and what must we drink; and how shall we be sure of something to keep us when we are old?" Dost thou do thus for thy soul?—"How shall I get my sins pardoned, my nature sanctified, and my soul saved? How shall I be sure of an eternal, heavenly house above, when this mouldering cottage of my body is tumbled down?" Doth it not shame thee to see the diligence of worldly men, that if they buy house or land they look narrowly to the writing, and ask advice and counsel, whether the title will be good, that they may be sure, and not defrauded? The old usurer will not let forth his moneys, but he will have good, sufficient security both for principal and interest, because he saith, and knows, it is good to be sure. Nay, yet farther, doth it not shame thee that many men should take more pains for hell than thou dost for heaven, and to be sure of damnation than thou dost to be certain of thy salvation? How do they daily drudge in the ways of wickedness, committing sin with greediness, with both hands, heartily, with their whole soul, as though they should not come to hell sure enough, or soon enough! while thou art dull, flat, listless in thy duties to God, and not praying heartily as for thy soul! Do not wicked men take more pains in breaking the sabbath, than thou dost in keeping of it? And do not they scorn duties, more than thou dost prize and practise them? But, further:

3. *Dost thou not too much forget thine own mortality?*—Dost thou indeed consider that thou art hasting into an eternal state, and must, within these few years, months, yea, weeks, enter into an unchangeable condition? Dost thou indeed believe heaven or hell is before thee? that eternal death, or eternal life, is at the end of this fading, short, momentary life? Or dost thou judge it to be indifferent whether be the place of thy everlasting abode? What is the matter? Good Lord! what sloth, stupidity, negligence, hath possessed our hearts! Surely, if thou didst

* *Operosè nihil agunt.* "They are officiously busy in doing just nothing at all."—EDIT.

believe that thou mightest be in thy grave to-morrow, wouldest thou not make sure of heaven to-day? If the lease of thy house be almost expired, and the landlord hath given thee warning to provide thee another habitation, (for he will not suffer thee to renew it any more,) dost thou not presently inquire of thy friends and of thy neighbours?—"Sirs, can you tell me where I may have a convenient dwelling? I have but a little time in the house where I am, and I have had warning to go out by such a day." Art thou not careful to have a house ready to go to upon the very same day thou leavest the former? Alas! man, dost thou not know the lease of thy life is almost out? Nay, dost thou not know that thou art only a tenant-at-will, and God may turn thee out at an hour's, at a moment's, warning? And yet dost thou not make sure of "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?" Hath not God given thee warning? Did thy head never ache? Was thy heart never sick? Surely, if thou didst not forget thy own mortality, thou wouldest be more careful, painful, diligent in thy business. I see frequently men upon their sick-beds, when they think they must die, begin to inquire after heaven, and how they may know their sins are pardoned, and whether their souls shall be saved; because the apprehension of the nearness of the grave doth rouse them; and, for all [that] thou knowest, thou, though now in health, mayest be as soon in thy grave, as he that lieth sick. God can stop thy breath when he pleaseth. Art thou mortal? Look, then, after thy soul.

4. *Is not this too great a slighting of the comforts of the Spirit of God? of Christ and happiness?*—Is there not so much excellency in all these, and sweetness in discerning thy propriety to* them, as to provoke thee to diligence in making sure of them?

5. *Dost not thou know that others have looked long after it, and dost thou think thou shalt come so easily to it?*—Others have prayed much, and searched themselves often, and yet have not been able to satisfy all their own doubts, whether they have gone farther than ever any hypocrite went: and dost thou think it will be so easily discerned whether thy heart be sincere with God? Many find it a hard thing to distinguish betwixt the highest degrees of common grace in hypocrites, and the lowest degrees of saving grace in a true believer.

6. *Dost thou think that conscience will never be awakened to disquiet thee, when thou canst not satisfy it about thy salvation?*—Will it always be in this spiritual slumber? Dost thou think that sickness will never come, and that death will never come, and that trouble will never seize upon thee? when thy conscience shall be so alarmed that thou wouldest give all thou art worth to know what shall become of thy soul? O then for an infallible evidence of God's love! O then that thou mightest know whether God will pardon thy sin, and save thy soul! O dreadful case, when thou comest to die, and conscience shall accuse thee for thy sloth, when thou feelest thy spirit begin to fail, and apprehendest thyself near the grave, and conscience rageth and is not at peace, because thou dost not know whether thou shalt go to heaven or hell! It is dreadful, doleful, sad, to hear these complaints from a dying man: "O, woe is

* The fourth edition has *in*.—EDIT.

me, that I must take my farewell of all my friends, and death is impatient of delay, and yet I cannot say my sins are pardoned! O woe is me! though I lie a-dying, I cannot say my sins are pardoned! Within a little while, my body must be carried from my bed to my grave; but, O, it breaks my heart that I cannot tell whether my soul, my precious and yet too-much neglected soul, shall be carried to heaven by holy angels, or dragged down to hell by cursed devils! O that God would grant me a month or two, a little longer, that I may work out my salvation!" But thy conscience shall tell thee, thou hadst time, but thou didst mis-spent it; thou hadst it, but thou didst not improve it in getting this grand question resolved, *whether thou hadst made thy peace with God*. Consider now how dreadful it will be, when conscience is awakened, and thou in this case unresolved!

7. *If thou be a true Christian, yet herein dost thou not act too much like the careless, ungodly world?*—They take no care to make sure of heaven; and wilt thou justify their practice, and harden them in it? There are some carnal ones in the family; a carnal husband, or a carnal wife, or ungodly children, or graceless servants, that mind not God, nor care for their souls, that look not after heaven: and wilt thou be guilty of encouraging them in their carelessness, and hardening them in their forgetfulness of God, by thine own remissness? But if thou wast serious in the use of means, pressing, following hard after God, thy strictness might shame them out of their wickedness, and might reflect upon themselves: "If such a one that lives so circumspectly, and taketh so much pains in duties, and yet doubteth, and fears, and would fain be resolved, what a careless wretch am I, never to regard my own soul!" They are ignorant of God and his excellency, of Christ and his beauty, of grace and its necessity; and therefore desire them not, nor care to make sure of them. But God hath opened thine eyes, to see all these. Stir up thyself, then, to get a certainty of thine interest in them.

8. *Art thou not too much guilty of hypocrisy, when thou goest to the table of the Lord, and yet dost not give diligence to make thy calling and election sure, nor to have the certain knowledge of the pardon of thy sin, and of thy peace with God?*—Is not the Lord's supper an ordinance for the helping the right receivers to assurance of the pardon of their sin, in the blood of Christ? Is it not for that end a seal of the covenant of grace? If thou sayest thou usest it for this end, why then dost thou look after it no more when thou returnest from that ordinance?

Having premised these things to awaken you, and rouse you out of your sloth, supposing that now you are resolved to take any course that can be prescribed from the word of God; that thou art one who weepst, mournest, complainest, because thou dost not discern thy spiritual condition; I shall lay down my advice to thee in these following Directions:—

DIRECTIONS TO GET ASSURANCE.

DIRECTION I. *Get some characteristic, distinguishing signs of true saving grace, by thy serious searching [of] the word of God.*—God hath told thee in his word who shall be damned, and who shall be saved;

though not by name, yet by the qualifications by which they are described. In the Bible, there are the statute-laws of heaven, and the standing rule by which you must be tried, [by which] thou must stand or fall, be eternally blessed or everlastingly miserable, as thy condition is consonant to or various from the infallible characters of saving grace contained in the scripture. Thou that hast deserved eternal death, mightest know before the day of the general assize whether thou shalt be acquitted or condemned.

But if thou know not how to gather these thyself, go to some godly, faithful minister, and desire him to give thee some characters of a sincere Christian from the word of God, wherein hypocrisy and sincerity are differenced; and be sure the signs thou triest thyself by be not short of saving grace, or that will not hold trial, or bear thee out at the day of judgment. I cannot here insert any, partly because I have not room to crowd them in, partly because by what I have already laid down under that head, *that a man might know that he is sincere, believeth and loveth God*, something to this purpose might be picked up.

DIR. II. When thou hast thus furnished thyself, thy next work must be to *set thy conscience on work, and reflect upon thy own heart, and upon the motions of thy will, and compare thyself with the word of God*.—The former sent you to study the book of God's word; this calleth upon you to study the book of your own hearts. The other is a direct act of the understanding; this is a reflex act to make a judgment of thy state, whether there be a transcript of those things in thine own heart; for every believer hath the gospel-laws written upon the table of his soul by the Spirit of God. Assurance cannot be had ordinarily, without the examination of our own hearts; for assurance is the certain knowledge of the conclusion drawn from the premisses, one out of the scripture, the other by the reflex act of the understanding or conscience; thus: "He that believeth and is justified shall be saved;" that is the word of God: then, by the search of his own heart, he must be able to say, "But I believe, and am justified;" and from these two doth result this assurance that he may conclude: "Therefore I shall be saved." The woman that had lost a piece of silver did light a candle, and swept her house, and thereby found what she had lost. (Luke xv. 8.) Conscience is this candle, the scripture is the fire at which it must be lighted, and self-examination is the broom whereby the heart is swept; and so the state of the soul, which before was not discerned, comes to be discovered.

But here take heed thy heart be not rash in affirming or denying. Suspend the determination till thou hast made a narrow, strict inquiry into thy soul. As thou lovest thy soul do not *presume*, as thou valuest thy comfort do not *deny*, *any work of the Spirit of God* upon thy heart; but with thankfulness acknowledge any thing that thou canst discern to be a fruit of the Spirit. Search thoroughly, and judge impartially. Say, therefore, to thy soul, to make thyself more serious in this weighty work, "Thou art now, O my soul, in the presence of the great heart-searching God, that knoweth certainly what thy state and condition is; what thy will, heart, and affections are.* Thou must, O my soul, shortly stand at

* *Deus est oculus infinitus.* "God is an infinite eye."—EDIT.

the bar of God, as now thou standest at the bar of conscience, and must be searched, judged by the Lord, and have the sentence of life or death, of absolution or condemnation, according as thy state shall be found to be. Consider, O my soul, thou art now about the greatest concernment in the world. Many have been mistaken; many are now tormented in hell, that once thought their condition was good. It is not therefore for thee to flatter thyself; and it is easy to be mistaken; and if thou shouldest be mistaken, it is as much as thy *soul* is worth: if thy condition be bad, and thou conclude it to be good, thou wilt but go more merrily to hell. It is as much as thy *comfort* is worth: if thy condition be good, and thou conclude it to be bad, thou wilt go more sadly to heaven, and wilt be unthankful to thy God, and keep the glory from him, and the comfort from thyself. Thou art indicted, O my soul, arraigned, and found guilty, that thou hast sinned against the Lord. The question is, whether thou hast repented, and art pardoned? I charge thee, therefore, O my soul, that thou speak truly, and answer right 'to these demands."

Art thou so far convinced of sin, of the vileness of its own nature, the evil in it, the evil after it, that thou art weary of it, thou groanest under it, thou loapest it, and art unfeignedly willing to be broken from every sin without any reserve? and what thou canst not estimate, that thou wilt bewail? Art thou so far convinced of thine own insufficiency to help thyself, that all thy tears cannot wash thee, and make thee clean, all thy duties cannot save thee? that though thou darest neglect them *as means*, yet thou darest not rely upon them *as a saviour*? so that thou seest the necessity of a Christ, the sufficiency of Christ? the sufficiency and willingness of Christ, offering himself unto thee in the gospel, calling to thee, crying after thee, saying, "Ah, thou poor, miserable, forlorn sinner! thou hast undone thyself: wilt thou now be cured? Thou hast wounded thyself: wilt thou let me apply a plaster of my blood, my healing, pacifying blood, to thy bleeding soul, to thy distressed, disquieted conscience? All that I expect from thee is, to take me for thy Lord and Husband, to rule, govern, sanctify, and save thee. Thou hast withstood thine own mercy; I have often asked thee, and thou hast often denied me; but yet if now thou wilt receive me, behold, I bring pardon along with me, and peace along with me, and eternal life, and every good thing along with me; yet mercy is not gone, it is not yet denied to thee." When thou mayest gather such things from the word of Christ, put the question to thyself, "What sayest thou, O my soul? Thou hearest the gracious words of the Lord Jesus: he commands thee to come, he inviteth thee to come, he promiseth thee acceptance if thou come. Art thou willing, or art thou not? Wilt thou persevere in thy former denial, and be damned; or wilt thou yield, and be saved? Wilt thou consent to take him for thy husband, and subscribe unto his terms? Doth thy judgment value him above all, and thy will choose him above all, and thy affections go out after him above all things in the world? as a woman doth in all those three respects, when she taketh a man to be her husband?"

Art thou so far convinced of the excellency of the everlasting glory of the saints, and the perfection of that happiness that is above, as it is a

state of *perfect holiness*, as well as a state of *real happiness*, that thou art willing to part with any thing that might hinder thee from obtaining of it, and do any duty prescribed by God, though displeasing to thy flesh, and use them as means for the attaining of so excellent an end? Wouldest thou have him, whatever it cost thee? Canst thou not be without him, whatever thou be without? Then pass sentence for thyself, concluding thy condition to be happy.

This is the nearest way to find out thy condition; not stand wrangling with thyself for thy former neglects any further than for thy humiliation; and do not so much inquire what thou hast not formerly done, as what now thou art really willing to do.

Besides this solemn, set examination, thou shalt find it very profitable to get and keep a sight of thy spiritual condition, to call thyself to an account every night before thou sleep, where thou hast been that day, what thou hast done, what company thou hast been in, what sin thou hast committed, what duty thou hast omitted; and mourn if thou hast fallen, and return thy hearty thanks to God if thou hast walked carefully and circumspectly that day. This counsel a noble Heathen did give, to call ourselves to an account before we sleep.*

DIREC. III. That thy assurance may be yet more complete and full, and thy comfort arising from the same more enlarged, *fall down at the throne of grace, and beg earnestly and pray importunately for the witness of the Spirit of God.*—For as it is the Spirit that worketh grace in us, so it is the Spirit that must discover the truth of that grace to us: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” (1 Cor. ii. 12.) “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Rom. viii. 16.) But beware thou take not satanical delusions for the Spirit’s persuasion, or the conceit of thy own brain for the witness of the Spirit. The Spirit never witnesseth any thing to any man contrary to what is revealed in the word; for he is a Spirit of truth, and never speaks contradictions; therefore, if any man thinketh that he hath the witness of the Spirit, testifying that he is a child of God, and yet is not holy, humble, penitent, he is deceived. But if thou hast the graces of the Spirit, and the Spirit witnesseth so much unto thy conscience, and with thy conscience; 1. It inflameth thy heart with love to God and Christ; 2. It raiseth more hatred in thee to thy sin; 3. Thou findest a mighty strength and power in it, engaging thy soul to walk humbly, holly with thy God; 4. A wonderful cogency in it to be zealous for God in suffering any thing for his sake, and doing and obeying any thing that he enjoins. Thou hast encouragement to ask this of God, because it is according to his will. (John xiv. 13, 14, 21.) “Lord, is it not according to thy will that I should be careful of my immortal soul, and make sure its eternal happiness and salvation? It is thy command I should do so; that I should examine myself whether I be in the faith, and whether Christ be formed in my heart. Lord, I

* Πη παρεθην; τι δ' ερεξα; τι μοι θεον ουκ ετελεσθη; For a translation of this part of the “Golden Verses” of Pythagoras, see p. 26.—EDIT.

have examined, but yet I cannot clearly see it. I see there are some grounds to hope it; but yet I cannot confidently assert it. O thou blessed Spirit of God, clear up mine understanding, and stir up and excite my graces, that I may feel the actings of them in my soul, and so better discern them. Though this be arbitrary, and not necessary, yet do to me as thou didst unto thy servant David; when he prayed that thou wouldest lift up upon him the light of thy countenance, thou puttest gladness into his heart." (Psalm iv. 6, 7.)

DIREC. IV. *Press after the highest degrees of grace, and be much in the exercise thereof, if thou wouldest clearly discern thy spiritual condition.*—The weakness of thy grace makes thee doubt of the truth of grace. The Christian must be like the crocodile, that grows as long as it lives, and ceaseth to be when it ceaseth to grow.* The body of a man is continually growing, till he come to his perfect age, and then ceaseth to grow; for then, though he may wax fat and broader, yet he riseth not higher, and his bones have no increase: so when we come to our full stature in Christ, to our perfect age in glory, we shall grow no more, because then we shall be perfect; but in our minority we must be always growing; and a growing person is easily discerned to be a living person. A dwarf cannot see so far as a taller man, nor be seen so far: so a little grace cannot be so easily perceived amongst a crowd of sins and corruption.

When grace at first is like Elijah's cloud, little like a man's hand, it was hardly discerned; but when it did increase, and the heavens were black with clouds, every eye could then perceive them. (1 Kings xviii. 43, 44.) Assurance is usually vouchsafed to Christians of the largest size. Men put not up a great mast or sail in a little boat, but in a larger vessel, that is able to bear it.

So also, by the strong actings and exercise of grace it is discerned. A man in his sleep, when he acts not reason, cannot judge himself to be a man. A man in a swoon, when he cannot be perceived to breathe, standers-by know not whether he be dead or alive, nor he himself.† Moral habits are acquired and strengthened by frequently-repeated acts, and more easily discerned. The fire lying raked under the ashes, is not so easily found, as when it, being blown up, breaketh forth into a flame. He that hath strong love to God will sooner feel it; and the more frequent it moveth, and is upon the wing after God, the sooner shalt thou know that thou lovest him. "The being of a thing is proved by its operation." *Operari supponit esse.*

DIREC. V. *Be well acquainted and informed in the nature of the covenant of grace, and the conditions thereof.*—Whatsoever are thy doubts, there is something in the covenant of grace that would be ground of satisfaction to thee: is it thine own unworthiness? Here rich and free grace is laid open. Is it thy long delay of coming unto God, that now thou thinkest it is too late? The gospel will tell thee, that Christ will not cast thee off, if now thou come unto him. Is it thy ragged, torn, imperfect obedience? The covenant of grace accepts of sincerity,

* As some affirm.

† *Animi quies, motus virtutis est*; "The moving activity of virtue, is the settled rest of the mind."

though there be many infirmities; the intention of the heart for the work of the hand; the purpose for the performance, where the sincere soul cannot do so much as he doth really desire to do.

DIREC. VI. *Prize the society of the people of God that are acquainted with the workings of God's Spirit upon their hearts.*—Be much in communion with the saints. When they have been unfolding their doubts, they have been in some good measure resolved; this hath quickened their hearts when they have been dull, and blown up the sparks of love in their souls to God, that they have felt their hearts to burn within them with love towards God. (Luke xxiv. 32; Psalm lvi. 16; Mal. iii. 16.)

DIREC. VII. *Keep a record of all the experiences thou hast had of God's goodness to thee; and what thou hast formerly found, make it a means for the supporting of thy soul for the present and the future.* (Psalm lxxvii. 10, 11.)—Such a time thou canst remember thou wast upon thy knees, bemoaning thyself, loathing thyself, full of sorrow and complaints, and God took thee up in the arms of his love, and spake, like a friend, words of peace and comfort to thy soul, and bid thee be of good cheer, he was reconciled to thy soul. He filled thee full of sorrow, and afterward filled thee full of joy. He cast thee down, and raised thee up. He broke thy heart, and bound it up. He came to thee, as to Mary, expostulating with thee: "Sinner, why weepest thou? What aileth thee?" Thou weepest for thy Saviour, and he was by thee, and showed himself unto thee.

So much for the means to obtain this certain knowledge of eternal life.

II. But if by the use of these and the like directions, the soul cannot get this assurance; and though he search, and pray, and grieve, because he hath not the light of God's countenance shining upon him, followeth the means, and longs to know his estate, and all things he enjoyeth are lessened in his esteem, because he cannot see his interest in Christ, whom he doth most esteem: to thee I will give these directions.

COUNSEL TO THOSE THAT, BY THESE DIRECTIONS, CANNOT YET OBTAIN THIS ASSURANCE.

1. *Though thou canst not say thy condition is good, yet do not say that thy condition is bad.*—Though thou canst not affirm thou hast the faith of evidence, yet do not peremptorily say, thou hast not the faith of adherence. Though thou hast not the witness of the Spirit for thee, yet do not bear false witness against thyself. Canst not thou say thou art sure of heaven? yet do not say there is no hope of heaven. Though thou canst not own heaven as thine, do not disown it; if thou canst not prove it, do not disclaim it. It is strange, yet ordinary, to see many doubting Christians dispute against themselves, and reason against their own comfort. Tell them of their longing after Christ, their weeping and mourning for him, they doubt it is not in truth: if you say to them, "If you do not truly love him, then let him alone, and follow no more after him: why do you grieve for him, because you cannot find him, if you do not truly love him?" they will reply, "Conscience will

put a man on to do something, when yet it may not be done out of love to God." If you ask, "Can you take up with any thing short of Christ?" though indeed they cannot, yet they will reply, "The heart is deceitful," and they know not what they should do. Frame not arguments *against thyself*, when thou canst not frame them *for thyself*: live by faith, when thou canst not live by sense and comfort.

Take heed here of judging thy condition to be bad, by trying thyself by rules not so suitable to find out the being and truth of grace, as the growth and increase of grace. And here,

(1.) *Say not, thou hast no grace, because thou hast not so much as thou seest others to have.*—To take notice of the eminent degrees of grace in others, to provoke ourselves to labour after the same proportion, is good; but to argue for a nullity of grace, because thou hast not such a quantity of grace as thou discernest in others, is not rational. Is there no water in the brook, because there is not so much as in the river? Is there not light in a candle, because there is not so much as in the sun? Wilt thou say thou art a beggar, because thou art not so rich as thy neighbours, that have a full estate? Or, that thou knowest nothing, because thou knowest not so much as the greatest scholar? Observe Peter in this case: he did not say,—when Christ asked him, "Lovest thou me more than these?"—"I love thee more than John or any of thy disciples love thee;" but, "I love thee." (John xxi. 17.) Thou must love Christ more than thou lovest any thing in the world besides, or else thou dost not sincerely love him; but thou must not conclude that, except thou lovest him as much or more than others love him, thou hast no love at all unto him. Yet this is ordinary: "I never was humbled so much as others have been; I cannot mourn as others do." Inquire now after the truth, rather than after the degrees; and know thy humiliation is true, First, when thou art broken for and from thy sin: so much bitterness upon the breast, as weaneth the child from it, is sufficient: Secondly, that makes thee see a necessity of Christ, and willing to close sincerely with him.

(2.) *Say not, thou hast no grace, because thou hast not grace proportionable to thy desires*; but rather hope thou hast it, because thou hast such enlarged desires after it. Is not he a froward, unthankful child, that saith his father hath given him nothing, because not so much as he desireth?

(3.) *Say not, thou hast no grace, because thou seest corruption in thee more than before.*—They were in thy heart before, though thou didst not discern them. The house is full of filth; but while the shuts are up, it is not perceived; but take them down, and you see it plainly, not because there is more filth, but because there is more light.

(4.) *Not because of the indisposedness of thy heart to, and dulness of thy affections sometimes in the time of, holy duties.*

2. *When thou canst not get assurance, make as much improvement of the grounds upon which thou mayest build hopes of salvation.* (Psalm xxxiii. 18; cxlvii. 11.)—The probable grounds [which] thou hast, thou wouldest not part with for all the world. If thy heart is not full of joy through the sense of God's love, yet thine eyes are full of tears, and thy

soul of sorrow, through the sense of thy sin. Wouldest thou change thy condition with any hypocrite whatsoever, with the richest man that hath no grace? I would not have thee rest satisfied with a probability, but yet bless God for a probability, of salvation. Is it nothing, that one that hath deserved hell most certainly, should have a probability that he should escape it? Would not this be a little ease to the torments of the damned, if they had but a strong probability that they may be saved? But "no hope makes it heavy." When thou art sick, thou inquirest of the physician: "Sir, what do you think of me? Shall I live or shall I die?" If he reply, "It is not certain; but there are good hopes, it is probable you will live, and do well;" this is some support unto thee in thy sickness.

3. *Discourse with such Christians whom thou darest not judge to be ungodly, and yet findest them to be in the same condition with thyself, having the same doubts, the same fears, complaining of the same sin; and do not pass a worse judgment upon thyself than thou darest upon them.*—This is a very useful way either to convince or support,—to consider our case in a third person. Thus Nathan convinced David. (2 Sam. xii. 1—14.) So the prophet convinced Ahab. (1 Kings xx. 35—43.) A man condemning another in the same case, becomes *αυτοκατακριτος*, "self-condemned." So a man approving of another in the same state and condition, clothed with the same circumstances, as himself, is to approve of himself. Thou hearest another say, he knows not what to think of his present and eternal state; but yet thou seest, and he tells thee, he dares not willingly sin; the desire of his soul is to walk holily and humbly with his God; he dares not neglect a commanded duty: thou darest not say, "This man hath no grace." It being as well with thee [as with him], say not worse of thyself.

4. *Forsake not duty, because thou wantest comfort.*—Thou hadst better want joy than neglect duty; for duty is more necessary than comfort, and in order to it; therefore [it] must be minded more. To seek comfort, may be in love to thyself; but to be constant in duty in the want of comfort, argues conscientious obedience to the commands of thy God. Though thou art not taken up into the arms of Christ, yet lie at his feet; though he doth not take thee into his bosom, yet throng among the crowd to touch the hem of his garment. He might deny thee comfort, and yet own thee for his child; but thou canst not deny him duty, and yet own him for thy God. If he do not tell thee thou art his son, yet do not thou say, thou wilt not be his servant. (Luke xv. 19.) I beseech thee, say not, "I will hear no more, I will pray no more: ordinances are in vain, and all endeavours will be in vain." Casting off hope clips the wings of serious, constant endeavours. Limit not God to thy time. Joseph did not presently discover himself unto his brethren, but carried himself as a stranger to them. Joseph knew that they were his brethren, but they knew not that they were related to him; but they often coming to him, and making known their perplexed condition in the grief and trouble of their souls, with sad complaints and moans, he could no longer refrain; his heart was full, his bowels did yearn, and the fire of love did so flame forth, that made his tears presently boil over.

“I am Joseph your brother: I will show you kindness; be not troubled.” (Gen. xlv. 1, &c.) While thou followest God with thy complaints, and pressest hard after Christ, he will at length show and make known himself unto thee. “O thou weeping sinner, I am Jesus thy Brother, I am thy Redeemer, I will be thy Saviour: though thou hast dealt unkindly with me, yet I will receive thee with the sweet embraces of my everlasting love.” Read Psalm lxxxv. 8; Hosea vi. 1—3; Isai. liv. 7, 8.

5. *Always be more observant of the purpose and disposition of thy heart, the inclination of thy will, the general scope of thy life, than the passionate sense of joy and comfort.*—There is but little constancy in these joys: like the tide, they ebb and flow; like a land-flood, [they] might overflow for a while, but a little after be dried up. Joys are the sweet-meats of the soul, but are not for its constant fare and diet; for a spiritual banquet, not for a standing-dish. Thus it was with David. And the experience of Christians proves it.

6. *When thou canst not experience the sweetness of the promise, yet then firmly believe the verity of the promise.*—The truth of the promise doth not depend upon our sense and feeling of it, especially when we would. There might be *evidentia credibilitatis*, when there is not *evidentia rei*, “sufficient reason to believe, because it is a promise made by God, when thou dost not as yet see the performance of it.” Though thou hast not tasted honey, yet thou wilt believe it to be sweet, if told by one that hath eaten thereof.

7. *Carry thyself really towards thy sin, as thou dost conceive, through mistake, God doth towards thee.*—Thou sayest, God doth not love thee; be sure thou dost not love thy sin. Thou sayest, he hath cast thee off; be sure thou cast off thy sin. Smile as little upon thy sin as, in thy greatest darkness of discomfort, thou sayest God doth upon thee. Lighten the ship by casting thy sins overboard, and thou shalt come safe to shore. This eclipse may be by the interposition of some sin betwixt thee and the light of God’s countenance.

8. *Diligently observe what grace is of the greatest growth in thy soul, and make the best improvement of that for thy support.*—The body natural doth grow in all the parts of it, but not equally as to all dimensions. The finger grows not to the magnitude of the wrist or arm. In mixed bodies, there are all the elements, but one is predominant. Amongst the many branches of a tree, one might out-top all the rest. In a ring of bells, all sound; but the great bell is heard above them all. In the new creature there are all graces radically and seminally; but yet one might be more eminent than the rest. In some, faith; (Matt. xv. 28;) in some, love to God; (Luke vii. 44, 47;) in some, sorrow for sin; (2 Cor. ii. 7; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12;) as every sin is radically in every wicked man, yet some sin is grown to a greater height, and, like Saul, is taller than the rest; in one, covetousness; in another, passion; in another, pride.

Moral virtues are connexed *communi vinculo*, “with a common bond,” yet they may be in several degrees: some have them *in gradu continentiæ*, [“in the degree of continence,”] that, though the disorders and pertur-

bations of the soul are very urgent and pressing, yet a man is able to resist and to suppress them; some, *in gradu temperantiæ*, ["in the degree of temperance,"] when the passions are more sedate and calm; some, *in gradu heroico*, ["in the heroic degree,"] when they are subdued and restrained, that they are subject to the government and rule of right reason, the guide and leader of the soul. Now, that grace that is most eminent is easily discerned. Make use of that.

9. *Blair not thine eyes, by always poring upon thy sin and wants, that are the reason of thy doubts and fears; but study also the righteousness and fulness of Christ, for the support of hope and confidence.*—Know, that if thou hadst never so little sin, (Gal. iii. 10,) yet thou hast need of a Saviour; and if thou hast never so much, he is willing and sufficient; (Isai. i. 18;) if thou hadst never so much sorrow and inherent grace, thou must be justified by the merits of Christ alone; (Job ix. 21; 1 Cor. iv. 4; Phil. iii. 8, 9;) and if thou hast but so much as is true and sincere, thou art justified, and shalt be saved. (Matt. xii. 20.) Set thy faith on work, therefore, to lay hold upon Christ, and faith will suck strength from Christ, as the child doth cleave to the mother by the navel, and receive nourishment from her. A twig that is shaken by every wind, yet tied to the body of a tree,—it standeth fast. Eye thy sin to cast thee down, and Christ's righteousness to raise thee up.

10. *Be more in practice than in disputes; and wherein thou wouldst inform thy judgment, proceed in a right method.*—Many weak Christians cannot see the complexions of their faces, because they are always looking into troubled waters, searching into needless disputes and questions. Notional knowledge in the scripture will never cure thy distemper; no more than [the] bare reading of Galen, or the works of some physician, will recover a man from a fit of sickness.

And where thou wouldst be informed, proceed in a right method. Question not thy election first, but thy true conversion. "God hath reprobated me: all will be in vain." But thou must prove thy election by thy conversion, as the cause is discovered by the effect. "We must begin in this where God doth end, and end where God doth begin." As on a ladder, he that is above, if he would come down to you, must first use the top rounds; but if you would go up to him, you must first use the bottom rounds, and ascend step by step. Election is the uppermost round, sanctification is at the bottom; and by our sanctification we must climb up to see our names written in the book of life. In building, men proceed *methodo syntheticâ*; * in pulling down, *methodo analyticâ*. † If you would take a watch to pieces, you must begin where the watchmaker made an end. The carpenter, when he builds, first lays the foundation, and finishes the roof last: when he pulls down, he takes off the roof, and so to the foundation. God did first choose, and then convert us; but we first know our conversion, and thereby our election.

* "By the synthetical method," that is, from the foundation of first principles up to the conclusion; or that which, beginning with the parts, leads onward to a knowledge of the whole.—EDIT. † "By the analytical method" of separating a matter into constituent parts, or resolving it into its first principles.—EDIT.

MOTIVES TO GET ASSURANCE.

In the close, take these MOTIVES drawn from the utility of this assurance, to quicken thee further to labour after it. This assurance will be,
1. Comfortable to thyself. 2. Profitable to others.

1. *It will fill thee with comfort.* (1.) *Under all God's providences.*
(2.) *Under all God's ordinances.*

(1.) *That is a desirable frame of spirit, that doth fit us to carry ourselves, under the various dispensations of Divine Providence wherewith the people of God are exercised, as most becomes the gospel of Christ, and the profession we make.*—Assurance helps us in this; for,

(i.) *Assurance sweetens every mercy.*—It is the sugar in our wine. He knows every mercy is given in mercy, and not in wrath. He knows it is not his portion: he hath much here; but he is sure he shall have more hereafter. But the want of this embitters all outward enjoyments to the doubting Christian; who saith, “What are the riches of the world to me, when I doubt whether the graces of the Spirit are infused into me? What is gold without God's love? And what is plenty without hope of heaven?”

(ii.) *Assurance will lighten every burden.*—With this he can bear the burden of adversity, as Samson did the gates of Gaza upon his back, (Judges xvi. 3,) without sinking under it.

First. *The assured believer knows he is rich in the midst of poverty.* (Col. ii. 2.)—“Though I cannot say, ‘Riches are mine;’ yet I can say, ‘Christ is mine;’ and that is more. Though I cannot say, ‘Silver and gold are mine;’ yet I can say, ‘Grace and glory are mine;’ and that is better.” This believer can look up towards heaven, and say, “Yonder is the place, the palace, the kingdom I have a title to; above yonder heavens must I for ever dwell; above yonder sun is a mansion for me. O, I long to be there, where I know I shall for ever be! My heart is filled with joy while I think on it. O, what joy shall enter into me, when I shall enter into that joyful, blessed place! Though now I walk in rags, I shall shortly be clothed with white and glorious robes. Now a cottage is my house, but a stately building is prepared for me.” (2 Cor. v. 1; John xiv. 2, 3.)

Secondly. *The assured believer rejoiceth in the sharpest sufferings for the gospel's sake.* (Heb. x. 34; Acts v. 40, 41; xvi. 23—25. Compare Gal. ii. 20, with Acts xx. 23, 24; xxi. 13.)—He can despise and scorn all the scorings, threatenings, and reproaches of the ungodly world; for though he seeth he is hated by men, yet he knoweth he is beloved by God.

(iii.) *Assurance is the best cordial in time of sickness, and a sovereign remedy against the fears of death.*—But it is sad to be a doubting Christian, when thou art a dying Christian.

(2.) *The assured believer may with comfort approach to God in all his ordinances.*—(i.) He can go to the throne of grace with humble boldness, crying, “Abba, Father.” (ii.) When he reads or hears the word of God, every part is welcome to his soul. When the promises are opened, he can say, “These belong to me.” When threatenings are denounced, he can rejoice, because he is delivered from the misery

threatened. When commands are urged, by assurance they are much facilitated: "This is my Father's command, I will do it; my Father's will, I will obey it." (iii.) He can approach with joy to the Lord's supper, and sit there with great delight. He sees the wounds, the sufferings, the sorrows, of Christ; and saith, "All this was for me."

2. *This assurance will make thee profitable unto others.* (1.) To the wicked; (2.) To the godly.

(1.) *To the wicked.*—(i.) *By this the wicked shall be convinced that religion is a reality*, that ordinances are not empty things; when they must acknowledge: "Surely these men meet with something from God in duty, which we are strangers to, that maketh them thus cheerful in all conditions."

(ii.) *By this they shall be convinced that that is false [which] they have conceived of seriousness in religion*; that if they close with Christ, they shall never have a delightful, pleasant life more. Drooping, disconsolate, mourning Christians strengthen this error in wicked men too much.

(2.) *It will make thee profitable to the godly.*—(i.) To the weak. (ii.) To the strong.

(i.) *Thou wilt be profitable to the weak*, by communicating thy experiences to them for their comfort and support. (2 Cor. i. 4.)

(ii.) *Thou shalt be profitable to the strong*, that have the same assurance with thyself. When two such meet together, O how sweet is their discourse of the joys of heaven, and of the comforts of the Spirit, and the delights of the life of a Christian!

These advantages, amongst many others that I might have named, hath the believer that is assured of his spiritual-safe condition, that a believer that yet knoweth it not doth not so fully enjoy. I shall conclude all with that exhortation of the apostle: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter i. 10, 11.)