

O what were man, might he himself misplace !
 Sure, to be cross, he would shift feet and face.

Stolen waters are sweeter to them than those waters they might lawfully drink at their own fountain : But withal know, it is not the having, but the delighting in a lawful wife, as God requires you to do, that thou must be a fence against this sin. So Solomon, Prov. v. 19. “ Let her be as the loving hind, and pleasant roe ; let her “ breasts satisfy thee at all times, and be thou ravished always with “ her love.”

Direct. 7. Take heed of running on in a course of sin (especially superstition and idolatry : in which cases, and as a punishment of which evils God often gives up men to these vile affections, Rom. i. 25, 16. “ Who changed the truth of God into a lie ; [worshipped] “ and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for “ ever, Amen. [For this cause] God gave them up to vile affec- “ tions,” &c. They that defile their souls by idolatrous practices, God suffers, as a just recompence, their bodies also to be defiled with uncleanness, that so their ruin may be hastened. Let the admirers of traditions beware of such a judicial tradition as this is. Woe to him that is thus delivered by the hand of an angry God ! No punishment in the world like this, when God punishes sin with sin : when he shall suffer those *κοινὰς ἐννοίας*, those common notices of conscience to be quenched, and all restraints to be moved out of the way of sin, it will not be long e'er that sinner come to his own place.

CAUTION IV.

IN the next place I shall make bold to expostulate a little with your consciences concerning the precious mercies you have received, and the solemn promises you have bound yourselves withal for the obtaining of those mercies. I fear God hath many bankrupt debtors among you, that have dealt slipperily and unfaithfully with him ; that have not rendered to the Lord according to the great things he hath done for them, nor according to those good things they have vowed to the mighty God of Jacob. But truly if thou be a *despiser* of mercy, thou shalt be a *pattern* of wrath. God will *remember* them in fury who *forget* him in his favours. I will tell you what a grave and eminent minister once told his people (dealing with them about this sin of unthankfulness for mercy) ; and I pray God it may affect you duly. * ‘ Let us all mourn (saith he) and take on ; we are all behind ‘ hand with God. The Christian world is become bankrupt, quite ‘ broke, makes no return to God for his love. He is issuing out ‘ process to seize upon body, goods, and life, and will be put off no ‘ longer. Bloody bailiffs are abroad for bad debtors all the world ‘ over. Christians are broke, and make no return, and God is break-

* Mr. Lockyer on Col. i. p. 115.

‘ing all. He cannot have what he would have, what he should have, he will take what he can get: for money he will take goods, limbs, arms, legs; he will have his own out of your skin, out of your blood, out of your bodies and souls. He is setting the Christian world as light and as low as they have set his love. Ah, Lord, what a time do we live in! long-suffering is at an end, mercy will be righted in justice, justice will have all behind, it will be paid to the utmost farthing; it will set abroad your blood, but it will have all behind,’ &c.

Do you hear, souls? Is not this sad news to some of you, who have received vast sums of mercy, and given God your bond for the repayment of him in praise and answerable fruit, and yet forfeited all and lost your credit with God? O how can you look God in the face, with whom you have dealt so perfidiously! I am now come in the name of God to demand his due of you; to call to remembrance the former receipts of mercy which you mind not, but God doth, and there is a witness in your bosom that doth, and will one day witness to your faces, that you have dealt perfidiously with your God. Your souls have been the *graves* of mercy, which should have been as so many gardens where they should have lived and flourished. I am come now to open those graves, and view those mercies that your unthankfulness hath killed and buried, to lay them before your eyes, and see whether your ungrateful hearts will bleed upon them. Buried mercies are not lost for ever; they shall as certainly have a day of * resurrection as thyself: it were better for thee they should have a resurrection now in thy heart, than to rise as witnesses against thee, when thou shalt rise out of the dust: that will be a terrible resurrection indeed, when they shall come to plead against thy soul. Nothing pleads more dreadfully against a soul than abused mercy doth. But I shall come to the particulars upon which I interrogate your consciences; and I pray deal truly and ingenuously in answering these queries.

Quer. 1. And, first, I shall demand of you, whether you never had experience of the power and goodness of God, in restoring you to health from dangerous sickness and diseases? Have you not sometimes had the sentence of death in yourselves? And that possibly when you have been in remote parts, far from your friends and relations, and destitute of all means and accommodations. Did you not say in that condition, as Hezekiah did in a like case? Isa. xxxviii. 10, 11, 12. “I said, in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living: I shall be hold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.” Remember thyself, Man; canst not thou call to mind the day when the arrows of death came whisking by thee, and it may be, hit those next thee; took away those that were as lively and lusty as thyself, when

* There is a double resurrection of mercy; a resurrection of mercy in mercy, and a resurrection of mercy in wrath. It is the first I now labour for, and that to prevent the second.

you began your voyage, and yet they were cast for death, thou for life, and that when there was but an hair's breadth betwixt thee and the grave? Tell me, soul, what friend was that who stood by thee then, when thou wast forsaken of all thy friends? When it may be thy companions stood ready to throw thee over-board, who was it that pitied and remembered thee in thy low estate? Who was it that rebuked thy disease! or, (as * one very aptly expresses it) 'restrained the humours of thy body from overflowing and drowning thy life? For, when they are let out in a sickness, they would overflow and drown it, as the waters would the earth, if God should not say to them, stay, you proud waves.' Who was it, man, that when thy body was brought low and weak, and like a crazy rotten ship in a storm, took in water on all sides, so that all the physicians in the world could not have stopped those leaks? Consider what hand that was which quieted and calmed the tempestuous sea, *careened* and mended thy crazy body, and launched thee into the world again, as whole, as sound, as strong as ever? Was it not the Lord that hath done all this for thee? Did he not keep back thy soul from the pit, and thy life from perishing? Yea, when thou wast chastened with pain upon thy bed, (as Elihu speaks) Job xxxiii. 19, 20, 21. and the multitude of thy bones with strong pains, so that thy life abhorred bread, and thy soul dainty meat; thy flesh consumed away, that it could not be seen, and thy bones that were not seen, stuck out: Yet then, as it is ver. 28. he delivered thy soul from going down into the pit, and caused thy life to see the light. Had the lamp of life been then extinguished, thou hadst gone down into endless darkness; hell had shut her mouth upon thee. Now tell me soul, what hast thou done with this precious mercy? Hast thou walked before the Lord in a deep sense thereof, and answered his end therein, which was to lead thee to repentance? Or hath thy stupid or disingenuous heart forgotten it, and lost all sense of it, so that God's end is frustrated, and thy salvation not a jot furthered thereby? Oh! if it be so, woe to thee! for the blood of this mercy, which thy ingratitude hath murdered, like the blood of Abel cries to God against thee. What a wretch art thou thus to requite the Lord for such a mercy! He saw thy tears, and heard thy groans, and said within himself, he shall not die, but live. Alas, poor creature! if I cut him off now, he is eternally lost: I will send him back a few years more into the world. I will try him, once more, it may be he will bear some fruits to me from this deliverance; and if so, well; if not, I will cut him down hereafter: He shall be set at liberty upon his good behaviour a little longer. And is all this nothing in thine eyes? Wretch that thou art, dost thou forget and slight such a favour as this? is it worth no more in thine eyes? Well, it would be worth something in the eyes of the poor damned souls, if they might have so many years cut out of their eter-

* Mr. Thomas Goodwin.

nity, for a mere intermission of their torments, much more as a time of patience and mercy. O consider what pity and goodness thou hast abused!

Query 2. Wast thou never cast upon miserable straits and extremities, wherein the good providence of God relieved and supplied thee? How many of you have been beaten so long at sea, by reason of contrary winds and other accidents, until your provisions have been exhausted and spent. To how short allowance have you been kept. And what a mercy would you have esteemed it, if you could but have satisfied nature with a full draught of water. Certainly, this hath ben the case with many of you. O what a price and value did you then set upon these common mercies, which at other times have been slightly overlooked! And when you have seen no hopes of relief, have you not looked sadly one upon another? and, it may be, said, as that widow of Sarepta did to the prophet, 1 Kings xvii. 12. "And she said, as the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." Even such hath been your case; yet hath that God, whose mercies are over all his works, heard your sorrows, and provided relief for you, either by some ship, which providence sent to relieve you in that distress, or by altering the winds, and sending you safe to the land before all your provisions have been spent. And hast thou kept no records of these gracious providences? Yea, dost thou abuse the creature, when thou art brought again to the full enjoyment of it; and possibly receivest the creatures, (whose worth thou hast lately seen in the want of them) without thanksgiving, or a sensible acknowledgment of the goodness of God in them? I say, dost thou thus answer the expectations of God? Well, beware lest God teach such an unworthy creature, by woeful experience, that the opening of his hand to give thee a mercy, is worth the opening thy lips to bless him for it. Beware lest that unthankful mouth that will not bless the Lord for bread and water, have neither the one nor the other to bless him for. I can give you a sad instance in the case, and I have found it in the writing of an eminent divine, who said he had it from an eye and ear-witness of the truth of it. A young man lying upon his sick-bed, was always calling for meat; but when the meat he called for was brought unto him, he shook and trembled dreadfully at the sight of it, and that in every part of his body, and so continued until his food was carried away. And thus he did as often as any food was brought into his presence; and not being able to eat one bit, pined away; but before his death he freely acknowledged the justice of God in his punishment: For, said he, in the time of my health, I ordinarily received my meat without thanksgiving. O let the abusers and despisers of such mercies fear and tremble!

Quer. 3. Have you not been eminently protected and saved by the

Lord, in the greatest dangers and hazards of life; in fights at sea, when men have dropt down at your right hand, and at your left, and yet the Lord hath covered your heads in the day of battle? And though you have been equally obnoxious to death and danger with others, yet your name was not found among theirs in the list of the dead. Or, in shipwrecks, ah, how narrowly have some of you escaped! a plank hath been cast in, you know not how, to save you, when your companions, for want of it, have gone down to the bottom; or you have been enabled to swim to the shore, when others have fainted in the way, and perished? In what variety of strange and astonishing providences hath God worked towards some of you, and what returns have you made to God for it? Oh, sirs! I beseech you, consider but these two or three things that I shall now lay before you to consider of.

Consid. 1. An heathen will do more for a dung-hill deity than thou, that callest thyself a Christian, wilt do for the true God, that made heaven and earth, Dan. v. 4. They praised the gods of silver, and of gold, and of brass, of iron, wood, and stone. When the Philistines were delivered from the hand of Samson, the text saith, Judg. xvi. 24. "They praised their god," &c. Then Dagon must be extolled. O let shame cover thy face!

Consid. 2. That the abuse of mercy and love is a sin that goes near to the heart of God. Oh! he cannot bear it. It is not the giving out of mercy that troubles him, for that he doth with delight; but the recoiling of his mercies upon him by the creatures' ingratitude, this wounds. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be ye horribly afraid." And again, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," Isa. i. 2. q. d. O you innocent creatures, which inviolably observe the law of your creation, be you all astonished and clothed in black, to see nature cast by sin so far below itself, and that in a creature so much superior to you as man, who in the very womb was crowned a king, and admitted into the highest order of creatures, and set as lord and master over you; yet doth he act not only below himself, but below the very beasts. "The ox knoweth his owner; (i. e.) there is a kind of gratitude in the beasts, by which they acknowledge their benefactors that feed and preserve them. Oh! what a pathetical exclamation is that, Deut. xxxii. 6. "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise."

Consid. 3. It is a sin that kindles the wrath of God, and will make it burn dreadfully against thee, unthankful sinner: It stirs up the anger of God, in whomsoever it be found, though in the person of a saint, 2 Cron. xxxii. 25. "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him: for his heart was lifted up, therefore there was wrath upon him and upon Jerusalem." And so you read, Rom. i. that the heathens, because they were not thankful, were given up to vile affections; the sorest plague in the world. It is a sin that the God of mercy scarce knows how to pardon, Jer. v.

7. "How shall I pardon thee for this?" This forgetting of the God that saves us in our extremities is a sin that brings desolation and ruin, the effects of God's high displeasure upon all our temporal enjoyments. See that remarkable scripture, Isa. xvii. 10, 11. "Because thou hast [forgotten] the God of [thy salvation,] and hast not been [mindful] of the rock of [thy strength:] Therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shall set it with strange slips: In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish; but the harvest shall be an heap in the day of grief, and desperate sorrow." The meaning is, that God will blast and curse all thine employments, and thou shalt be under desperate sorrow. The meaning is, that God will blast and curse all thine employments, and thou shalt be under desperate sorrow, by reason of the disappointment of thy hopes.

Consid. 4. It is a sin that cuts off mercy from you in future straits: If you thus requite the Lord for former mercies, never expect the like in future distresses. God is not weary of his blessings, to cast them away upon such souls as are but graves to them. Mark what a reply God made to the Israelites, when they cried unto him for help, being invaded by the Amorites, Judg. x. 11, 12, 13. "Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and ye cried unto me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods, wherefore I will deliver you no more." O sad world! it is as if the Lord had said, I have tried what mercy and deliverance will do with you, and I see you are never the better for it: Deliverance is but seed sown upon the rocks. I will cast away no more favours upon you; now look to yourselves, shift for yourselves for time to come; wade through your troubles as well as you can. O brethren! there is nothing more quickly works the ruin of a people than the abuse of mercy. O, methinks, this text should strike terror into your hearts? How often hath God delivered you? Remember thy eminent deliverance at such a time, in such a country, out of such a deep distress: God was gracious to thy cry then, thou hast forgotten and abused his mercy: what now, if God should say as in the text, therefore I will deliver thee no more? Ah, poor soul! what wouldst thou do then, or to whom wilt thou turn? It may be thou wilt cry to the creatures for help and pity; but, alas! to what purpose! They will give as cold and as comfortless an answer as Samuel gave unto Saul, 1 Sam. xxviii. 15, 16. "And Samuel said unto Saul, Wherefore hast thou disquieted me to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore have I called thee, &c. Then said Samuel, wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?" Oh!

thou wilt be a poor shiftless creature, if once by abusing mercy thou make it thine enemy !

Consid. 5. It is breach of vows made in distress to obtain these mercies ; they have been easily forgotten and violated by thee when thou hast obtained thy desire : A word or two to convince you what a further evil lies in this, and how by this consideration thy sins come to be buoyed up to a greater height and aggravation of sinfulness ; and then I have done with this head.

A vow is a promise made to God, in the things of God. The obligation of it is, by casuists, judged to be as great as that of an oath. It is a sacred and solemn bond, wherein a soul binds to God in lawful things ; and being once bound by it, it is a most heinous evil to violate it. It is an high piece of dishonesty to fail in what we have promised to men, saith * Dr. Hall ; but to disappoint God in our vows, is no less than sacrilege. The act is free and voluntary ; but if once a just and lawful vow or promise hath past your lips, saith he, you may not be false to God in keeping it. It is with us for our vows, as it was with Ananias and Sapphira, for their substance : “ Whilst “ it remained (saith Peter) was it not thine own ?” He needed not to sell and give it ; but if he will give, he may not reserve : it is death to save some ; he lies to the Holy Ghost, that defalks from that which he engaged himself to bestow. If thou hast vowed to the mighty God of Jacob, look to it that thou be faithful in thy performance ; for he is a great and jealous God, and will not be mocked.

Now I am confident there be many among you, that, in your former distresses, have solemnly engaged your souls thus to God ; that if he would deliver you out of those dangers, and spare your lives, you would walk more strictly, and live more holy lives than ever you did. You have, it may be, engaged your souls to the Lord against those sins, as drunkenness, lying, swearing, uncleanness, or whatsoever evil it was that your conscience then smote you for ; the vows of God (I say) are upon many of you. But have you performed those vows that your lips have uttered ? Have you dealt truly with God ? or have you mocked him, and lied unto him with your lips, and omitted those very duties you promised to perform, and returned to the self-same evils you have promised to forsake ? I only put the question, let your consciences answer it. But if it be so, indeed, that thou art a person that makest light of thy engagements to God, as indeed seamen’s vows and sick men’s promises are, for the most part, deceitful and slippery things, being extorted from them by fear of death, and not from any deep resentment of the necessity, and weight of those duties to which they bind their souls : I say, if this sin lie upon any of your souls, I advise you to go to God speedily, and bewail it ; humble yourself greatly before him, admire his patience in forbearing you, and pay unto him what your

* Cases of conscience.

lips have promised. And to move you thereunto, let these considerations among many others, be laid to heart.

Consid. 1. Think seriously upon the greatness of that majesty whom thou hast wronged by lying to him, and falsifying thy engagements. O think sadly on this! it is not man whom thou hast abused, but God; even that God in whose hand thy life and breath is. For although (as one truly observes) there be not in every vow a formal invocation of God, (God being the proper correlate, and, as it were, a party to every vow, and therefore not formally to be invoked for the contestation of it;) yet, there is in every vow an implicit calling God to witness; so that certainly the obligation of a vow is not one jot beneath that of an oath. Now if God be as a party to whom thou hast past thy promise, and that obligation on that ground be so great; Oh what hast thou done! for a poor worm to mock the most glorious Majesty of heaven, and break faith with God; what a dreadful thing is that? if it were but to thy fellow-creature, though the sin would be great; yet not like unto this. Let me say to thee as the prophet Isaiah, chap. vii. 13. "Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?" If you dare to deceive and abuse men, dare you do so by God also? Oh! if the exceeding vileness of the sin do not affect thee, yet methinks the danger of provoking so dreadful a Majesty against thee should! And therefore consider,

Consid. 2. That the Lord will most certainly be avenged upon thee for these things, except thou repent. O read, and tremble at the word of God! Eccl. v. 4, 5, 6. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it: for he hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow, and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou, before the angel, that it was an error; wherefore [should God be angry] at thy voice, and [destroy] the works of thy hands?" Mark, God will be angry, and in that anger he will destroy the work of thy hands, i. e. saith Deodate, 'bring thee and all thy actions to nought, by reason of thy perjury.' Now, the anger of God, which thy breach of promise kindles, as appears by this text, is a dreadful fire. O, what creature can stand before it! as Asaph speaks, Psalm lxxvi. 7. "Thou, even thou art to be feared; and who may stand in thy sight, when once thou art angry?"

Consid. 3. Consider, that all this while thou sinnest against knowledge and conviction; for did not thy conscience plainly convince thee, when imminent danger opened its mouth, that the matter of thy neglected vow was a most necessary duty? If not, why didst thou bind thy soul to forsake such practices, and to perform such duties? Thou didst so look upon them then; by which it appears thy conscience is convinced of thy duty, but lust doth master and over-

rule: and if so, poor sinner, what a case art thou in, to go on from day to day sinning against light and knowledge? Is not this a fearful way of sinning? and will not such sinners be plunged deeper into hell than the poor Indians, that never saw the evil of their ways, as thou dost? Ponder but two or three scriptures in thy thoughts, and see what a dreadful way of sinning this is: Rom. ii. 9. "Tribulation, anguish, and wrath, to every soul of man that doth evil, to the [Jew first], and also to the Gentile." To the Jew first, i. e. to the Jew especially and principally; he had a precedency in means and light, and so let him have in punishment. So James iv. 17. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin;" i. e. Sin with a witness, horrid sin, that surpasses the deeds of the wicked. So Luke xii. 47. "And that servant that knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Which is a plain allusion to the custom of the Jews in punishing an offender, who being convicted, the judge was to see him bound fast to a pillar, his clothes stript off, and an executioner with a scourge to beat him with so many stripes: but now those stripes came but from the arm of a creature; these that the text speaks of are set on by the omnipotent arm of God. Of the former there was a determinate number set down in their law, as forty stripes; and sometimes they would remit one of that number too, in mercy to the offender, as you see in the example of Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 24. "Of the Jews I received forty stripes, save one;" but in hell no mitigation at all, nor allay of mercy. The arm of his power supports the creature in its being; while the arm of his justice lays on eternally. Soul, consider these things; do thou not persist any longer then in such a desperate way of sinning against the clear conviction of thine own conscience, which in this case must needs give testimony against thee.

Well then, go to God with the words of David, Psal. lxxvi. 13, 14. and say unto him, "I will pay thee my vows which my lips have uttered, and my tongue hath spoken when I was in trouble." Pay it, soul, and pay it speedily unto God, else he will recover it by justice, and fetch it out of thy bones in hell. O trifle not any longer with God, and that in such serious matters as these are?

And now I have done my endeavour to give your former mercies and promises a resurrection in your consciences. O that you would sit down and pause a while upon these things, and then reflect upon the past mercies of your lives, and on what hath passed betwixt God and your souls in your former straits and troubles? Let not these plain words work upon thy spleen, and make thee say as the widow of Sarepta did to the prophet Elijah, 1 Kings xvii. 18. "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance?" But rather let it work kindly on thy heart, and make thee say as David to Abigail, 1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33. "Bles-

“sed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice.”

CAUTION V.

THE fifth and last danger I shall warn you of, is your contempt and slighting of death. Ah! how little a matter do many of you, at least in words, make of it? It seems you have light reverential fear of this king of terrors, not only that you speak slightly of it, but also because you make no more preparations for it, and are no more sensible of your preservations and deliverances from it. Indeed the heathen philosophers did many of them profess a contempt of death upon the account of wisdom and fortitude; and they were accounted the bravest men that most despised and slighted it: But, alas, poor souls! they saw not their enemy against whom they fought, but skirmished with their eyes shut; they saw indeed its pale face, but not its sting and dart. There is also a lawful contempt of death. We freely grant that in two cases a believer may contemn it. *First*, When it is propounded to them a temptation on purpose to scare them from Christ and duty, then they should slight it; as Rev. xii. 11. “They loved not their lives unto the death.” *Secondly*, When the natural evil of death is set in competition with the enjoyment of God in glory, then a believer should despise it, as Christ is said to do, Heb. xii. 2. though his was a shameful death. But upon all other accounts and considerations, it is the height of stupidity and security to despise it.

Now, to the end that you might have right thoughts and apprehensions of death, which may put you upon serious preparation for it; and that whenever your turn comes to conflict with this king of terrors, under whose hand the Pompeys, Cæsars, and Alexanders of the world, who have been the terrors of nations, have bowed down themselves; I say, that when your turn and time comes, as the Lord only knows how soon it may be, you may escape the stroke of its dart and sting, and taste no other bitterness in death, than the natural evil of it: To this end I have drawn the following questions and answers, which, if you please, may be called *The Seaman's Catechism*. And, oh! that you might not dare to launch forth into the deeps, until you have seriously interrogated and examined your hearts upon those particulars. Oh! that you would resolve, before you go forth, to withdraw yourselves a while from all clamours and distractions, and calmly and seriously catechise your own selves in this manner.

Quest. 1. What may the issue of this voyage be?

Ans. Death, Prov. xxvii. 1. “Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” Jam. iv. 13, 14. “Go to now, ye that say, To-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”