

TO MY WORTHY FRIEND,

DR. HENRY SAMPSON.

SIR,

I Have perused the papers which you sent me, and find, as far as I can recollect, they contain in them the substance of what was delivered; with no more mistakes than is usual in writing from the mouth of one who is not of the slowest speakers.

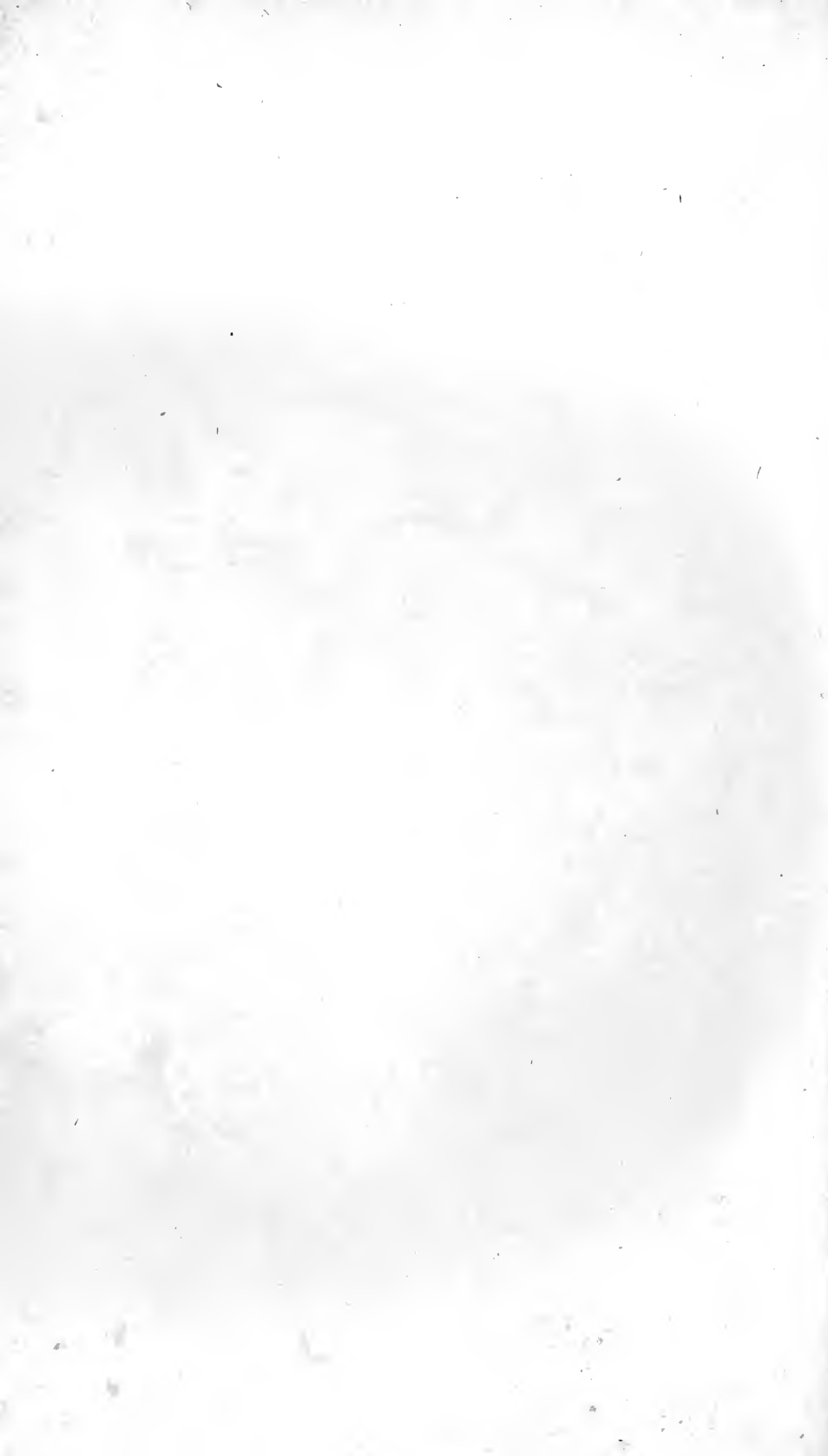
Some things besides, which the limits of the time allowed not to be spoken (having some short memorials of them by me) I have added, conceiving they might also contribute towards the good end you proposed to yourself, in so earnestly desiring this publication, the assisting of their patience, and their good and placid thoughts of God, who are exercised under long and languishing distempers. The observations which your profession hath occasioned you to make, in the cases of many others, hath I doubt not let you see the need of somewhat to this purpose; otherwise the example you have had so long before your eyes of so calm and composed a temper, in this excellent relative of yours, might have made you less apprehensive how great an addition a fretful inquiet spirit is, both to the sin, and the affliction of a sickly state. I am sensible your own affliction is great, in the loss you now sustain; the relief will be great, and suitable, which the forethoughts of that state will afford, where they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God, in heaven.

I am, Sir,

Yours in much sincerity, and affection,

to serve you in the work
and labour of the gospel,

J. H.



ON THE DEATH OF

Mrs. ESTHER SAMPSON.

Luke xiii. 16.

And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day ?

YOU will soon see the occasion, and connection of these words, by viewing over the whole paragraph to which they belong, ver. 10. And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. (11.) And behold there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. (12.) When Jesus saw her, he said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. (13.) And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. (14.) And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work : in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. (15.) The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite ! doth not each of you on the sabbath loose his ox and his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering ; (16.) And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day ? (17.) And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed : and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Inasmuch as our blessed Lord spake these words, and did the thing which occasioned them, upon that which was, with the Jews, their Sablath-day ; it cannot be unfit for us to con-

sider them upon ours, they so fitly leading us to consider also another release, wrought for a daughter of Abraham too, on our Sabbath-day. It was formerly told you upon what occasion, and I doubt not but you generally know upon whose account we were to divert from our usual course, and subject at this time. Nor could any thing have been more suitable to the present occasion, for not only was this daughter of Abraham released from her infirmity upon the sabbath-day; but the time wherein it remained upon her, in a great and manifold complication, was (as her surviving consort hath acquainted me, and who therefore recommended this subject) precisely about eighteen years.

There are, it is true, disagreements between our case, and that case in the text, which do not therefore render both together less instructive to us, but the more. And, to make way to what may be so, you must here take notice, that these words are part of our Lord's defence of what he had done, in performing this work of mercy, wherein what he says is justly severe, and very clearly convictive. It is very deserved and just severity, that he called him, who caviled in the case, by his own true name, thou hypocrite. He, under pretence of great sanctity, discovers the highest enmity, even against our blessed Lord himself, who came (being sent) upon the holiest and kindest design into this world. The zeal which he pretends for the observation of the sabbath, could not be the thing that he did really mean, or that acted him in this case; for it was not likely he could be ignorant of what was a known adjudged case among the Jews (as some of their own rabbies * inform us) that all needful endeavours ought to be used for the cure of the sick upon the sabbath-day. So as that he very well knew, no rule could be broken in this case. But this he reckons was somewhat plausible, and he pleases himself in it, that he could tell how to vent his spite against Christ and Christianity, under a mock-shew of great sanctimony. And our Lord justly calls him what indeed he was, when he would thus seem what he was not. It was not that he cared for religion, or for any thing of real sanctity, of which a due and just observation of the sabbath was a real part; but that he had a mind, as far as conveniently he could, to express his displeasure at that evidence and lustre, wherewith the glorious works

* Vid Maimon. constitut. de fundam. c. 5. 9. cum Abrav. N. 13, 14. And, as our own Dr. Lightfoot says upon that question of our Lord's: Is it lawful to heal upon the Sabbath-day? (quoting divers more of theirs to that purpose) he violated not the Sabbath so much as their own canons allowed. See his works, vol. 2.

our Lord wrought evinced him to be the Messiah ; while yet he was struck with that awe of him, that he adventures not to direct his reproof to him, but the people.

It is here by the way to be noted, that they were not thus disaffected to our Lord, and the religion he was about to introduce ; no, but this ceremonious bigot, a ruler of the synagogue, was the ill-pleased disaffected person.

I shall not trouble you with the discussion what sort of power it was that belonged to that office. Some, well acquainted with the jewish writings, say that the ruler of the synagogue was not wont himself to officiate, as minister *in sacris* ; but his business was *circa sacra*, to regulate the administration. We consider not his power, but his ill-will and enmity against Christ and true religion. The people, in the mean time, thronged after him in multitudes, and beheld the great works he wrought with joy, and glorified God. Only where was more power, and probably more knowledge, there was more too of a peevish spite and envy, that the interest of our Lord was, by so proper means, growing in the world. A sad (and not a new) thing ! that religion should have most opposition, whence it should have most of countenance, and advantage to dilate and spread itself. Do any of the rulers believe on him ? But the people (whom they despised, and pronounced accursed for that reason) were more apt and forward to receive the gospel, Joh. 7. 48. 49. The more there is of light, unaccompanied with a pious inclination, the higher, the more intense and fervent, the finer and more subtle is the venom and malice against Christ, and real Christianity.

But our Lord was not diverted from his kind and compassionate design, by any such obstructions as these. His love triumphs over them, and he make that discovery of his compassion which could not but carry the clearest conviction with it ; as his reproof carried the brightest justice. Why what saith he : Do not any of you loose an ox, or an ass from the stall on the sabbath-day ? and shall not I loose a daughter of Abraham ? It is like she was a daughter of Abraham, not only as being a jewess, but as being a believer, as being, according to Scripture language, of Abraham's seed in the spiritual sense, as well as the natural, and he was the more peculiarly compassionate upon that account ; and yet more, because her ail proceeded from the malignant influence of the devil. Shall not I loose such a one whom Satan hath bound, that great enemy of mankind ? Why should not I shew myself so much the more a friend, by how much the more he appears an enemy, and give the earliest relief the matter can admit ?

It is very true indeed, his compassion was never to incline

him to do unfit and unseasonable things, or things that were no way subservient to his principal end; but such a subserviency being supposed, his relief must be with the earliest, to day before morrow, though it were the sabbath-day. And so now you have the ground of discourse plainly in view before you. That the devil cannot be more maliciously intent to afflict those that relate to God (even, when it is in his power, with bodily distempers) than our Lord Jesus is compassionately willing to relieve them, without distinction of time, when it shall be consistent with, and subservient to his higher and greater purposes. In speaking to this, I shall,

I. Touch briefly upon what is here expressed in the text, the hand that Satan may have in the afflictions, yea and in the bodily distempers of men, and even of them that belong to God among them.

II. What hand our Lord Jesus has in their relief and release.

III. How far we may understand, or may reasonably expect his compassion to influence him, in such cases.

IV. I shall shew that however the release be wrought, it is done very mercifully towards them that belong peculiarly to God.

V. And so make use of all.

I. Somewhat briefly as to that first query: What hand it is supposable the devil may have in the afflictions of men, and more particularly of them that belong to God; as that woman, being a daughter of Abraham, was to be considered, as one within the compass of God's covenant, and not improbably as one that, in the strictest sense, was in covenant with God.

1. It is plain, in the text, the devil had a direct hand in her distemper, called a spirit of infirmity. There were more evident, and more frequent instances of this kind in that time, the devil then setting himself more openly to contend against the incarnate Son of God, upon his more open appearance to rescue and recover an apostate world from under his dominion and tyranny. But as to more ordinary cases we may further consider,

2. That the devil is a constant enemy to mankind, apt and inclined, as far as God permits him, to do men all the mischief he can.

3. That as he first introduced sin into the world, so he hath, by consequence, all the calamities that afflict it. There had been no death, sickness, or distemper upon the bodies of men, but from hence. Consider the devil therefore, as the prince and leader of the apostacy, who first drew man into transgression, and thereby rendered him liable to the justice of his Maker, turned his paradise into a desert, and a region of

immortal undecaying life into a valley of sickly languishings and death itself. So may he be said to have had a remoter hand, in binding not only this daughter of Abraham, but every child of Adam, in all the afflictions, maladies, and distempers which befall them here; and finally in the bonds of death too, whereof he is said to have had the power Heb. 2. 14, 15. Though the children of the second Adam (with whom, for this purpose, he was partaker of flesh and blood, and became with them a son of Abraham, and of his seed) are, by being so bound, released and made free, both from death, and the bondage of fearing it, to which they were otherwise subject all their days; as we shall further see anon.

4. Though God do not ordinarily allow him more power, yet we may well suppose him to have more malice against these children of Abraham (who thereby pass into the account of his own children also) being more intent upon vexing and afflicting whom he apprehends or suspects he shall never be able to destroy; and always apt to use all the power shall be allowed him, to this mischievous purpose. We find that the afflictions of the people of God, in other kinds, and even in this kind, are expressly, often, attributed to the devil. In other kinds: Satan shall cast some of you into prison, Rev. 2. 10. And divers think that thorn in the flesh, which the apostle suffered, (2 Cor. 12.) was some acute bodily pain; and he says expressly: It was a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him. He, it is said, smote Job with the tormenting boils that afflicted him so grievously, and so long, and brought the other calamities upon him, that you read of in his story.

5. And again it is further to be considered, that whereas in all diseases the morbid matter, whether immediate in men's bodies, or remoter in the encompassing air, differs not from other matter, otherwise than only in the various disposition, figuration and motion of parts and particles, whereof it is made up; inasmuch as the devil is called the prince of the power of the air, we know nothing to the contrary, but that he may frequently so modify that, as that it shall have most pernicious influences upon the bodies of men; and upon those especially, so far as God permits, that he has any greater malice against.

6. And again (supposing this) it is not a stranger thing that God should permit him to afflict the bodies of them that belong to him, than to disturb their minds. Sure their bodies are not more sacred. If we should suppose that he may some way or other perniciously agitate the humours in human bodies, it is no harder a supposition than that he should so variously form the images in the fancy, by which he tempts; for herein surely he comes nearer us, and is more inward to us.

7. Nor is it less supposable that God should, in some instances, permit the devils to follow their inclinations in afflicting his people, than wicked men to follow theirs, which, in the general, carry them to the same thing ; when he knows how to turn the one to after-advantage, as well as the other. But we have no ground to think, notwithstanding all this, that the wisdom and goodness of providence will ordinarily permit that this agency of the devil, in the mentioned cases, shall be altogether in a contra-natural way ; but only, by so moving and acting with natural causes, that he may be also obviated, through the ordinary blessing of God, by natural means, and and causes too. Much less is it reasonable that diseases should be themselves reckoned very devils, as was the opinion of the gnostics of old, wherein they much concurred with the manichees ; whom, together with them, the more honest-minded pagan Plotinus so copiously confutes (though that was more anciently a common opinion, the Septuagint's rendering the word that signifies *plague* by the word *δαίμωνιον*, in several places of Scripture, seems to intimate. But the commonness of such an opinion, in a dark time, signifies nothing to sway ours this way, or that) But whatsoever hand the devil may be supposed to have in their afflictions, or sicknesses that belong to God, we are,

II. Sure that our Lord Jesus has a most kind hand (whensoever it is) in their release, which though it were here in a more extraordinary and immediate way, and beside the course of nature, the disparity in this case signifies nothing to the lessening of the favour, towards those whom he vouchsafes to relieve in other cases ; for the influence that he has in ordinary cases is as truly divine. If the cure of a diseased person be wrought, by his blessing, upon ordinary natural means ; his co-operating with nature is less amazing, but not less effectual, or less kind : as also the efflux from God is (for his own part) as real, when he works with second causes, as without them, and as immediately reaches the effect, in both the senses of immediateness, whereof so much noise is made in the schools.

And we must further know our Lord Christ is now the universal Regent of all nature, even as he is the Christ, the world being devolved into his hands, and all power being given to him both in heaven, and earth. He is Lord of all, when therefore any of you are sick, it is by his disposal, if you are recovered out of that sickness. Nor is his agency less or lower, whether it be by blessing a medicine, or working a miracle ; his power, and love are the same either way. And know there is an honour, and acknowledgment due from chris-

tians to their great crucified Lord, who hath founded a dominion over this world in his blood, who died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of living, and dead. Therefore you are to reckon you are beholden to Christ for all your recoveries, and all your refreshings that you meet with, amidst the many infirmities and frailties of this your present mortal state.

And if the release be by death, as the case is which we now have specially to do with, that universal power of his, over all lives, must be understood immediately to reach to that case too. It is he that measures lives, that lengthens them out, and cuts them shorter at his own pleasure. And as to those that are more peculiarly his own, it is a more peculiar, and favourable superintendency that he has over that affair, even of their very dying. Their death is precious in his sight. He with a most gentle tender hand unties the knot of man, releases and receives the dislodging soul: Lord Jesus receive my spirit, as dying Stephen speaks. But

III. We are to consider how far our Lord Jesus his compassion concerns him in such cases, or wherein that may move him to interpose in them, so as in this case he did.—And here two things are to be asserted—That his compassion has not supreme and principal influence in this case; and—That yet it hath real influence.

1. That it hath not supreme or principal influence in such cases. And this doth really require to be more principally insisted on, as of greater importance to narrow, terrene minds, that are apt to measure all things by themselves, and in reference to their own little sphere and compass; and to themselves only in their present state, as they are inhabitants of this minute spot of earth; as if all things ought to bend, and and yield to their present convenience and accommodation here. Whereupon they wonder when they are sick, and in pain, God doth not presently relieve and ease them; and think they should do so for any friend, or neighbour, if it were in their power.

Know, therefore, it was not from compassion, as the solitary, or as the chief inducement that our Lord did work this release for this daughter of Abraham. That cannot be supposed, for he can never be understood to make a creature, and the advantages of a creature, his supreme end. That would have been to invert the order of things, to dethrone God, and deify man, and had been itself a real sort of that idolatry, which was one among the many horrid evils which he purposefully came to redress, and give remedy to in this apostate degenerate world. He had a greater inducement, that is that he

might diffuse the glory of God among the children of men ; and that he might give evidence thereby to the truth of his own mission, and prove most convincingly that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, the very person that was anointed, and sent about that great undertaking, to recover God's rights in this lapsed world, to bring about a reconciliation between God, and men. And upon this account, when he wrought cures upon men's bodies, it was out of a higher compassion to their souls. And though even this itself, of saving men's souls, was not his highest design, but the glory of God (as we shall see further by and by) yet it being truly designed by him, and more principally than their bodily ease and relief, this was an apt means to this his lower end. For whereas, in order to this, he was to manifest himself a divine Saviour ; it was requisite he should give a joint, and an equal demonstration of the two things which his being so implies, his godlike power, and love. The former alone it did not serve his purpose to shew, which he might have shewn as much by inflicting plagues on men's bodies, as working cures ; by striking them with blindness, lameness, &c. as by giving them sight and soundness. But it was necessary to his end his miracles should be beneficent, and that he should (as it is elsewhere said in the evangelical story he did) go about doing good, and not make men afraid of him, by showing the power of a God in destructive strokes, and judgments ; but (which became a Saviour) express a divine good will towards men, and thereby make his way into their hearts, bring them to understand, and own a Saviour ; and as such to fall in, and comply with his kind design towards them. And this, as it served to exalt God in this world, chiefly induced him to work this present cure. If his compassion towards a poor afflicted woman, labouring under bodily infirmity, were his principal inducement ; if therefore, she must be presently cured out of hand, even on the sabbath-day, because she had been now bound eighteen years : why, I pray you, was she to have been bound eighteen years ? or why bound at all ? His divine knowledge of the case, and power to have redressed, or prevented it, had as well served his compassionate inclination long before. Or why was not such a course formerly set on foot, and continued in the world, that men might be cured of blindness, deafness, lameness, fevers, dropsies, or whatsoever other maladies, easily, and by speaking a word, in any former time ? Why was it deferred to this time ? Or why hath not such a course been kept a foot ever since his ascension ? Hath heaven rendered him less merciful, and compassionate ? Is it so unkind, and ill natured a place ? It is true that his apology for the cure he now wrought, to this ruler of the sy-

nagogue, seems to have no higher reference, nor was he bound, unseasonably, to declare his utmost end and design, to a prejudiced, malicious enemy. That was to speak itself, to shine by its own light, and by such means and methods as these, gradually to make its own way into less obstructed minds, insensibly sliding in upon them; which might better be done (time being given at leisure to consider things) by the real evidence which his works carried with them, than by industrious, and often-repeated verbal commentaries and expositions.

He sometimes spake it out expressly, as he thought fit, to competent and more prepared hearers, that his great design was to make himself, and his errand be understood; who he was, and what he came into the world for; that he was the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and that his business was to save them that were lost; and to restore God's interest in an apostate lost world whose rights were to be cared for, in the first place. He redeemed us to God by his blood, Rev. 5. 9. Or for the glory of God, as he summed it up in the case of Lazarus, when he was told of his being sick, Joh. 11. 4. This sickness is not unto death, that is, it was not to terminate in a continuing death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of man might be glorified; the same account which this evangelist gives of all these his great works, and why they were recorded, that we might believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, &c. chap. 20. 30. And otherwise was it so considerable a thing, that a man well got out of this fearful gulf, as Lazarus now was, should be fetched back again! that so mighty a wonder should be wrought! that the inclosure of the grave should be torn open! and the released soul should be again drawn down, as a bird escaped, caught back into its former confinement, to converse a while longer amidst the impurities of a world lying in wickedness, and with shadows, in a world the fashion whereof passes away!

No, miracles were not so cheap things. We may observe the great, and wise God hath, for great and weighty reasons, been always very sparing in making very observable innovations upon nature, or any considerable changes in the ordinary course and method of natural causes, and their operations, as a thing less suitable to a state of probation, wherein men were to be held in this world. And hath only been wont to do it, where the inconvenience was to be balanced by preponderating greater reasons; which might as much require that he should depart from the fixed rule sometimes, as other reasons might, that he should not do it often. It was equally necessary that miracles should not be common, as that there should be any wrought at all; and in great part for the same reason.

For if they were common, they must lose the only design, for which they could be at all useful. If God should do, in this kind, what is not necessary, he should the less effect by it that which is; inasmuch as they are only useful, as they are strange, and, in the natural way, unaccountable. But there is nothing so great in this kind, but ceases to be thought strange, if it be common; otherwise, is not the forming of the eye, in itself as great a thing, as to give sight to the blind? Or the framing such a world as this as great a thing, as the most stupendous miracle that ever was wrought in it?

It was indeed necessary somewhat extraordinary should at first be done, to demonstrate that man, Jesus of Nazareth, to be the Son of God; which it was impossible should otherwise be known. When that was fully done, it was not necessary there should still be a repetition of miracles, from age to age, to prove the former were wrought, or the truth of the narratives which reported them. That was sufficiently to be known, in the ordinary way, as other matters of fact are, or other history, about which there is no doubt made among men. And the history of these things has greater advantages to recommend it to the certain belief of after-time, than most that ever were writ besides, upon many accounts. It was indeed most becoming the majesty, wisdom, and goodness of God (taken together) to do what might answer the real necessities of men, whom he was designing to save; but not to indulge their curiosity, nor their unaccountable dulness, sloth, or prejudice, whereby they may be unapt to inquire about, or receive plain things.

Therefore miracles were to be done as rarities, sometimes, not at all times; and at such a time, and upon such an occasion most of all to notify, and signalize the Redeemer, at his first appearance, to draw men's eyes upon him, that they might take notice of him, and demean themselves towards him accordingly. This was to be done sufficiently once for all. And the great stupidity of the world made a matter, which needed some supernatural evidence, need so much in that kind. Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. And if he did so far comply with the necessity of degenerate humanity, as to give once some signal convictive evidence that he was the Christ; the divine wisdom would take care it should not be so often done, as to become trivial, and insignificant to its proper end; the importance whereof was such, as that it ought to transcend any regard to the welfare of men's bodies, but not to exclude it: Which we now come briefly to shew, in the next place, namely.

2. That though compassion towards an infirm creature,

under bodily distemper, was not the principal inducement unto this cure ; it was a real one. Our Lord doth really compassionate the frailties of those that relate to him, while they dwell in mortal flesh. He himself bears our sicknesses. He has a tenderness towards them, even while he doth not think it fit actually to release and set them free ; which makes way to what was proposed, in the last place, to be insisted on, as preparatory to the intended use.

IV. That in what way soever our Lord Jesus works a release for them that are most specially his own, from their bodily distempers ; he doth it in mercy to them. He lets their affliction continue upon them in mercy, greater mercy, indeed, than would be in an unseasonable deliverance. But when he sees it a fit season to give them a release, that is an unquestionable mercy too ; though it be not in such a way, as appears such to vulgar eyes.

It is more easily apprehensible to be from compassion, if he relieves a poor, pained, weak, languishing, sickly creature, by giving renewed strength, and ease, and health in this world. But when the release is by death, as in the case we have under our farther present consideration, it is hard to persuade that this is done in mercy, that there is compassion in this case. There is, it is true, in this a manifest disparity, but not a disadvantageous one. Is it a less thing to release a holy soul from the body, than from bodily distempers ? It can only be so in the opinion of such blind moles of the earth, as the children of men, are now generally become. But let the case be considered according to its true and real import. Why ! a recovery from sickness is but an adjournment of death, it is but death deferred a while. When there is a release wrought in such a way as this, in which hers was wrought, whom God hath lately taken from amongst us ; here is a cure, not only of one bodily distemper, but of all ; not only of actual diseasedness, but of the possibility of ever being diseased more ; here is a cure wrought, not only of infirmity, but of death. For the saints conquer death by suffering it, yea a cure, not of death only, but of mortality, of any liableness to death, so as it can never touch them more ; yea further, not only of bodily diseases, but of spiritual too, far worse, and more grievous than all bodily diseases, whatsoever ; a cure of blindness of mind, deadness, and hardness of heart, of all indispositions towards God, his ways, and presence, towards the most spiritual duties, and the best, and most excellent of our enjoyments. The body of sin, and the mortal body are both put off together. The imprisoned soul is set free, and enters upon a state of everlasting liberty ; is released

from the bands of death, of whatsoever kind, and in the highest, fullest sense shall reign in life, through Jesus Christ. What is the decease of a saint, but a translation out of a valley of death, a golgotha, a place of skulls, a region where death reigns into the region of perfect and everlasting life? It is not to be called death simply or absolutely, but with diminution; it is death only in a certain respect, when in a higher, and much more considerable respect, it is a birth rather, a dying out of one world, and a being born at the same time into another, a much more lightsome, a purer, and more glorious world. The soul is cured in a moment, of whatsoever was grievous or afflicting to it; and the body put into a certain way of cure, of being made from an earthly, mean, mortal thing, heavenly, spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal; from a vile, a glorious body, like Christ's own, and by that power, by which he can subdue all things to himself, Phil. iii. 21.

V. And now for use.

1. Learn that there is no inconsistency in the case, that the same person should be at once the subject of long continued bodily affliction, and of divine compassion. These are reconcileable things, sickly languishings, under which one may be ready to fail; and compassions that fail not. This is a common theme, but the due consideration of it is too little common. Let it now be considered, with impartial equity, and with deep seriousness. Do you think the all-comprehending mind of the Son of God now first began to pity this daughter of Abraham? While he was not yet ascended, this attribution is given him; otherwise, no doubt, than as a false compliment; Lord, thou knowest all things—Since his ascension, we are assured he hath a feeling of our infirmities, so as to be touched with them, a continuing sympathy, remembering the inconveniencies of that state he had passed through, (as she once, *non ignara mali, &c. not unmindful of the evil, &c.*) and is always ready, therefore, to do the part of a faithful, and merciful high priest. Before his descent, we must, with equal reason, suppose him to have an entire prospect of the sad case of wretched mortals, in this miserable world of ours. What else made him descend? And after that he was descended, this mark could not but lie still before the eye of his divine mind, to which all his works were known from the beginning of the world. Yet the cure is deferred, the release is not given till the appointed season. When it is the case of any of you to be afflicted with long sickness, and to feel the tediousness of a lingering disease (count upon it that it may be so, as it is like it hath been, with divers of you) do not then permit the matter to the censure of an incompetent, partial judge. If you consult flesh and blood, if

sense be to pronounce in the case and give judgment, how hard will it be to persuade that you are not neglected in your languishings, that your groans and faintings are unpitied; though you are so plainly told: That whom the Lord loves, he chastens? Are you not ready to say, How can this stand with being, at the same time, the object of divine pity? If he pity me, would he let me lie, and languish thus, in so miserable a plight, day after day, and year after year? Yes, these things very well agree, and I would fain shortly evince to you that they do.

(1.) His compassion may sufficiently be evidenced in another kind and by another sort of instances. Sure it will speak compassion, if he frequently visit his frail infirm creatures, and by his visitation preserve their spirits, if he support them, if he refresh them, this is grace. My grace shall be sufficient for thee, saith he to the great apostle, when he refused to release him from that thorn in the flesh, that messenger of Satan that did buffet him.

(2.) Besides, compassion may appear by this kind of dispensation itself. It may not only carry that with it, but in it, which may shew good-will. If long continued affliction may be supposed to proceed from compassion, it doth much more consist with it. It may proceed from compassion, and bear the relation to it of an effect to the cause. We find it expressly so said in Scripture, and who can so truly speak God's mind as himself? He afflicts in very faithfulness, and as many as the Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives, Prov. iii. 12. quoted, Heb. xii. 5, 6. Rev. iii. 19. Affliction must be the effect of his real, and most sincere good-will, and compassion, though of long continuance, if it be apt, and intended to do you good, in higher and in greater regards than those wherein you suffer. Or if the good your affliction does you, or is fitly designed to do you, be of a nobler and more excellent kind, than that whereof it deprives you; it must be understood, not only to be consistent with kindness and good-will, but to be produced of it. For the same principle that intends the end, must also intend the proper means that serve to effect it. Now the kind of this good is thus to be estimated. You read Psal. ciii. 13. As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him. As a father. The relation he is in to them, is that of a father to his children. But we must understand, under what notion, he is related; and we are told, Heb. xii. 9, 10. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not then much rather be in subjection to the Father of our spirits, and live? For they, verily for a few days, chastened us

after their own pleasure ; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. We have here an account where the relation terminates, and see both the object of his more special kindness and good-will, which accompany the relation, and the end of it. He is the Father of their spirits, whence, therefore, we may collect, the object of that love, which goes with the relation, must be their spirits also : the end of it is their spiritual advantage, to make them partakers of his own holiness. His holiness is a lofty word, and carries the matter high. Understanding it soberly (as we may be sure it was meant) it must signify the holiness which he hath himself impressed, and the impression whereof is the lively resemblance and image of his own. And is not this a good of a nobler, and more excellent kind, than we can lose by a sickness ? better than the ease of this vile flesh, that was made out of dust, and tends thither ? The object is their spirits, for there the kindness, that belongs to the relation, must terminate, where the relation terminates. How much more shall we not be subject to the Father of our spirits, and live ? The Father of our spirits is there contradistinguished from the fathers of our flesh. God is not the father of our flesh, but the Father of our spirits ; He is the Creator of our flesh too, our flesh is his creature, but not his offspring. There must be a similitude and likeness of nature between a father, and a child, which there is not necessarily between a maker, and the thing made. In respect of our spiritual part, we are his offspring ; and he is so a Father to us, both as the souls of men in common bear his natural image, and, if they be regenerate, as they bear his holy image too. And the case may be so, that the suffering of our flesh is necessary for the advantage of our spirits. Our flesh may suffer so, as that the spirit shall be the better for it ; and then pity itself, compassion itself must not only permit, but cause and produce such a course of dispensation, as whereby that end shall be attained, the making us partakers of his holiness. So the apostle speaks of his own case : Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 16. Though our outward man perish. We are compassed about with deaths, that are continually beating down the walls of this outward man, they are beating upon it, and are likely to infer its perishing ; and if it perish, let it perish, I am not solicitous as though he had said about that. If it must come down, let it come down ; in the midst of all these outward assaults, our inward man is renewed day by day, gathers a fresh, and increasing strength, and vigour, whilst this outward man is tending to dissolution and dust. And several ways such continued afflictions, upon the

outward man, may make for the advantage of the inward man, in the best kind.

[1.] As they withdraw, and take off the mind and heart from this world, a debasing and defiling thing ; and which transforms the soul, that converses too much with it, into a dunghill, fills it with ill savour. But what doth all this world signify to a sickly, pained person ?

[2.] As it engages them to be much in prayer. Nothing is more suitable, than that an afflicted life, be a life of much prayer. Is any man afflicted, let him pray, Jam. v. 13. Much affliction hath a natural aptitude to incline men this way. In their affliction they will seek me early, Hos. v. 15. It is a dictate of nature, even when grace, as yet, hath no possession ; but which through God's blessing, may, by this means, help to introduce it. For it urges the soul Godward, who is the God of all grace : obliges it to converse with him, whereby somewhat better may be gained than is sought. In their afflictions they will be submissive and lie at my feet, saith God ; they will seek me early, from whom, otherwise, I should never hear, it may be, all their life long. Oh ! that you would understand the matter so, when God afflicts in such kinds, so as his hand touches your very bone and flesh ; this is the design of it, to make you pray, to bring you upon your knees, to put you into a supplicating posture : if he can, upon any terms, hear from you, though you seek him but for bodily ease and refreshing, it may be a means of the greatest advantage to you, ere God have done with you, when once he has brought you, by this means, to treat ; when he has got you into a more tractable disposition, there is hope in the case. If thus he open your ear to discipline, and be to you an interpreter, one of a thousand, to shew you his righteousness ; he may seal instruction to you, and save your soul from going down to the pit, having found a ransom for you, Job xxxiii. 15. &c.

But for those that have a real interest in God, and union with Christ, that which occasions much prayer, is likely to be the means of much spiritual improvement, and advantage to them.

[3.] It puts several suitable graces upon exercise, and by being exercised, they grow. It tries their faith, and improves it. Faith is, in such a case as this, necessarily called forth into act, if there be the principle ; and as it acts, it grows, and becomes more and more strong, and lively. Their patience is exercised by it, and perfected ; and that has a great influence upon their universal perfection. Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect, Jam. 1. 2, 3, 4. There will be a universal languour (as if he should have said) upon your

spirits, if you be impatient; if you cannot suffer (as patience is an ability for suffering) if you can by no means endure, without tempestuous agitations, or sullen despondencies of spirit. But if patience have its perfect work, that will infer a universal healthfulness, and good habit into your whole soul.

Their love to God is, in such a case, eminently tried, and improved. Blessed is the man that endures temptation (tentative affliction is there meant, as above, ver. 2.) For when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him, (Jam. i, 12.) which implies, their love to him is the great thing put upon trial, in that case. And it is a great trial of love to God, a very improvable opportunity of discerning its sincerity, when, upon a long affliction, you can appeal to God, and say: Thou knowest I love thee; though thou smite and kill, I will still love thee. No discontentful notion, no repining thought shall ever be allowed a place in my breast; there may be sighs, but no murmurings, groans, but no tumults, nothing of displeasure against thy holy pleasure.

[4.] It occasions such to live much upon the borders of eternity. Under affliction we look not to the things that are seen and temporal; but to the things that are unseen, and eternal; which make us count our affliction, though long, but momentary, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. And those souls will prosper and flourish that have so unspeakably more to do with the other world, than with this. It is in this way that the afflictions of this present state do work for us the far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory, (ver. 17.) as they direct our eye forward, while we look, (18.) not to the things that are seen, which are but temporal; but to the things that are unseen, and eternal. Life and spirit, strength and vigour enter, as though he had said, at our eye, which is prompted by the horror of frightful spectacles in this scene of things, to look to another, where all things appear lightsome, pleasant, and glorious.

There are other considerations, whereby you might argue to yourselves not only the consistency, but the great suitableness of an afflicted state in this world, with God's favour, kindness, and compassion towards you. As that when he is more highly provoked, he threatens not to afflict, as the heaviest of penalties. Why should they be smitten any more? Isa. i. 5. I will no more punish your daughters, &c. Hos. iv. 14. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone, ver. 17. And again also, That his Covenant obliges him to it, as to them, who are, on stricter terms in covenant with him, Christ's own seed be-

ing signified by David's ; as by David is manifestly Christ himself, Psal. lxxxix. Where you may see how, and after what tenor his covenant runs, ver. 30, ——— 34. According whereto he himself elsewhere acknowledges, that in very faithfulness God had afflicted him, (Psal. cxix. 75.) that in experience, we are apt to grow remiss, secure and negligent, when all things are externally well with us. And let us but appeal to ourselves, how much a wakeful temper of spirit, under affliction, is better than carelessness, and vanity of mind, accompanied with fleshly ease and pleasure : that we can ourselves easily apprehend, that it may not only consist with the tenderness of a parent to have the wound of a child searched, though with much pain ; but proceed from it : that in heaven our judgment of things will be right and incorrupt, where we shall apprehend no cause of complaint, that through many sicknesses, diseases, and death itself, our way was made for us thither. And if that shall then be a true judgment, the thing itself must be as true now. But these I hastily hint, and pass to some further use.

2. We may next collect, that since it is out of doubt the devil may have some hand in our outward affliction ; we are concerned to take so much the more care, that he may not have his end upon us by it. A hand he may have, and we cannot determine how far ; but whether it be more or less, great care we are concerned to take how to frustrate his design. He has the most mischievous ends that can be, and designs worse things to us than the affliction, which is the means, whatsoever that be. He would fain engage us in a controversy with God, would have us contend with him, murmur, fret, blaspheme and curse God ; and therewith send out our last, and dying breath. That was his design upon Job. Let us labour to frustrate it, as he did. Divers of the ancients (Justian Martyr, Jerome, Cyprian, and Austin) speak much to this purpose, how great a design the devil drives in being the author of sicknesses and diseases to men, that he might make them apply themselves to him, and divert from God ; as that wicked prince did, whom by the prophet we find so sharply reprov'd for it, as if there were no God in Israel, that he went to the god of Ekron (some demon or other, as we have reason to think) The last mentioned of these authors speaks of it as just matter of excommunication, when those that bear the name of Christians shall, in such cases, use means bearing no natural proportion or accommodateness to the end, charms, spells, &c. for ease, or cure of maladies ; wherein no relief could reasonably be expected, but from the devil's agency, who may be officious enough, if especially he have first hurt, to heal too, that by practising

upon their bodies, he may entangle their souls ; and (according to his wont of running counter to God, who wounds that he may the more effectually heal and save) by a present temporary cure, wound mortally, and finally destroy.

He hath not left the world (no not the Christian world) quite ignorant of his methods in these kinds, of training men, by gradual steps, into things, first, that seem innocent, and then into such familiarities (whether their real distress, or their curiosity were the first handle he took hold of them by, or the engine by which he drew them) till, at length, it come to express covenanting. If the matter come not so far, it is rare to come off from the least tamperings without a scratch. He that is born of God, keeps himself, that the evil one may not touch him, (1 John. 5. 18.) as knowing he designs to touch mortally, and, if he touch, to kill. If it proceed so far as a solemn league, how tragical consequences doth story abound with! That of count Matiscon (plucked away by the devil from among divers persons of quality, whom he was entertaining, and at noon-day, whirled in the air three times about the city, in open view of the people, to whom he in vain cried for help) reported by some historians ; and that of an infamous magician of Saltzburg, and divers others, are instances both very extraordinary, and very monitory. But as to a future ruin, which he finally aims to involve men in, with himself ; he hath not faster hold of any, than those that have learnt to ridicule every thing of this kind, and who have put so much sadducism into their creed (consisting of so many negatives, or things they believe not, that they scarce leave enough positive to admit that name) as to think there is no such creature, perhaps as being conscious there can be no worse than themselves. But how near is he to them that think him out of the universe !

3. Since it is possible the devil may bind even those that belong to God, with some kind of bodily affliction or other ; it is the more to be apprehended, how much worse bonds they are, in which he binds those that do not belong to him. Oh ! that you would be serious here ! How many such sad cases are there, amongst even them as may be feared that are called christians, concerning which it may be said, here is a soul that satan hath bound, not eighteen, but, it may be, thirty, forty, fifty years ! Oh ! when shall this soul be released, that satan hath so long bound !

4. As from the devil's malice to the bodies of men, we may collect his greater malice to their souls ; so we may judge proportionably of Christ's compassions, that as they incline him to give them all suitable relief in their bodily afflictions, as far as can consist with those measures which infinite wisdom hath

pitched upon, for the government of this present world, and as shall fall in with the design of his office of a Redeemer and Saviour to us; so they much more incline him to relieve embondaged souls. For this doth most directly fall in with his design, and is the proper business of his office; the other may be only collateral to it, and as it were to be done on the bye. He came not into this world to procure that men might not be sick, or pained, or be presently restored to health, and ease; but he came and died, that souls might live; to procure for them pardon, reconciliation with God, all needful assisting influences of grace, and eternal life. Of these therefore they may be most assured, if they duly apply themselves. And some encouragement to expect so much they may draw, even from this instance. This infirm woman, in order to bodily cure, did apply herself to him, she came after him, as others did, for this purpose, and did, in a sort, put herself in the way of his healing influence. Now if any of you find your souls are yet held by the devil, in worse bonds; apply yourselves to the merciful compassionate Jesus: there is hope in the case. Oh! will you not say so much to him for a soul in bondage? Lord, loose this poor soul of mine, that satan hath bound for so many sad years. Do but labour to know you are bound, to feel your bonds. Whatsoever there is of prevailing sin in you, it is a bond, by which the devil holds your souls. The wicked are held in the cords of their own iniquities, Prov. 5. 22. And sins are said to be the works of satan, from which it is the design of the Redeemer to loose us. The Son of God was for this purpose manifested, that he might destroy (we read) it is that he might dissolve the works of the devil, as though he had said, that he might release, and unbind souls, that the devil as yet holds in fast bonds. And you may find you are so bound, when upon self-reflection you take notice, you are ordinarily restrained from what you should do, against the light and conviction of your own minds and judgments; that is, you find, if you reflect, a conviction hath taken place in your consciences that you ought to love God, but there is with you no such motion of soul, no inclination towards him; you ought, in a stated course, to pray, and pour out your soul to him, but you are bound, you cannot offer at it, you have no liberty for it, your terrene inclination, or love to vanity plucks you back; you ought to walk in the ways of God, but you are fettered you cannot move a foot; you ought to do the works of God, but you are manacled, you cannot stir a hand. Are you so bound, and will you not know it? What! never feel your bonds; when once they are felt, you will soon begin to cry, and supplicate. And if once you shall be brought seri-

ously, and incessantly to supplicate, it may be hoped the release will follow. Was our Lord so compassionate towards infirm bodies, in the days of his flesh in this world; and do we think he, above, is less compassionate to souls? Can it be thought heaven hath altered him to your disadvantage? Is he less kind, benign, and less apt to do good, now he is enthroned in glory? Why should you not believe he will give release unto your captived embondaged souls, if you implore his help and mercy, with seriousness, and insist upon it, and do not give him over? Say to him, Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me; for do you not know it is his office? The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and opening of prisons to them that are bound, Isa. lxi. 1. What! will you be bound all your days, and never lift up a cry to the great Redeemer and Saviour of souls, to give you release? How deservedly should these bonds end with you in the chains, wherein the devils themselves shall for ever be bound with you?

5. We may collect, there is an awful regard due to the sabbath-day. When our Lord justified the cure now wrought on their sabbath, only on this account, that it was an act of mercy towards a daughter of Abraham; by the exception of such a case he strengthens the general rule, and intimates so holy a day should not, upon light occasions, be otherwise employed, than for the proper end of its appointment. Though our day be not the same, the business of it, in great part, is; by the reason given in the fourth commandment, which being placed among the rest of those ten words, so many ways remarkably distinguished from the other laws given the Jews, and signifying that these were intended not to them alone, but to mankind, and given upon a reason common to man; the words also not necessarily signifying more, than there should be a seventh day kept as sacred to God, reserving it to after significations of his pleasure to mark out, and signalize this or that day, as he should see fit. And our Saviour having told us expressly: The sabbath was made for man (that is as men, not for Jews, as Jews) These considerations taken together, with many more (not fit to be here mentioned) do challenge a very great regard to the day, which we have cause to think it is the will of God we should keep as our sabbath.

6. That there is somewhat of privilege due, by gracious vouchsafement and grant, to the children of Abraham, to Abraham's seed, that is, to speak by analogy, to the children of covenanted parents. Abraham is considerable here, as being under that notion, a father; whosoever of you therefore are the children of such, as were of the faith of Abraham, and you

are now come to that adult state, wherein you are capable of transacting with God for yourselves, and wherein the *transitus* is made from minority to maturity : if now you own the God of your fathers, if you will now say, my father's God shall be my God ; he keeps mercy for thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments, that is, if there were a thousand generations of such, (generations being spoken of so immediately before, namely, that he would visit iniquity upon them that hate him, to the third, and fourth generation ; but shew mercy to them that love him, and keep his commandments, unto a thousand generations, that is to never so many) if you will not, when now grown up, disavow your father's God, if you will avow and own him, and devote yourselves to him ; he will be your God, as well as theirs. Here is now the privilege due to Abraham's children, or to the children of covenanted parents. God has an early preventive interest in them, upon which they may lay their claim to him, as their God ; if they will but now give up themselves to him, and stand to his covenant. But if you will not do so, but slight, and reject the God of your fathers, then your birth privilege can signify nothing to you ; then think not to say with yourselves, We have Abraham to our father, in that 3d. of Matthew's gospel ; for God will never want children, he is able of stones to raise up children to Abraham, as if he had said, rather stones than you. And then indeed, upon a true account, Abraham is none of your father, as our Lord Jesus tells the Jews, if you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. You do so and so, thus did not Abraham, John viii. 39, 40. Pray consider what Abraham was, and how he lived on earth, like an inhabitant of heaven, as an heir of the heavenly country, his business was to seek the better country, that is, the heavenly ; wherefore God was not ashamed to be called his God ; as in that 11th. to the Heb. ver. 16. But if you will go from day to day grovelling in the dust of the earth, this did not Abraham. If you will spend your lives in the pursuit of vanity and trifles, this did not Abraham. There is a great privilege belonging by gospel grant, unto the children of covenanted parents, if they do not forfeit it, by neglecting, and practically disavowing their father's God.

7. But I further infer hence, that since this compassion has a real, though not a principal hand in the release that is given to them that belong to God, in whatsoever way they are released, from all their infirmities, and ails, and afflictions in this world ; it very much becomes, and much concerns all the children of Abraham patiently to wait for it, in God's own way. Patient-

ly, I say, in God's own way wait for it. The children of Abraham shall be loosened sooner or later, and in one way or other, though very long, though so many years bound by such and such afflicting distempers. You have a great instance of this kind in that daughter of Abraham, whom God hath called away from us. In all that long exercise, the main thing she was ever wont to insist upon, was that in all this affliction she might gain patience, submission, and instruction. And in her later time, when she drew nearer to eternity, was more in view of it, that was the great subject wherewith she entertained herself, and was conversant much with somewhat more lately written upon that subject, as by Mr. Shower (now known to most or you) and by another author. And her last entertainment, as I have been told (as to helps from creatures in any such kind) was the repetition of what some of you have heard concerning the Immanuel, wherewith she formerly pleased herself, as being, it is likely much habituated in the temper of her spirit to the thoughts of him; that having, by agreement with her pious consort, been their motto,* at their first coming together, Immanuel, God with us.

8. I shall only add one instruction more, to shut up all, that since our Lord Jesus hath such an agency, and even with compassion in the release of those that do belong to him, from their afflicting infirmities; we should all of us labour, with a due and right frame, and disposition of spirit to behold any such releasement. It is a great matter to be able to behold instances of that kind, with a right frame of mind, and spirit. If one be released by recovery, into ease, health, and strength in this world; it is easily and readily made matter of joy. Is one recovered out of a long and languishing sickness? Friends and relations behold it with great complacency and gladness of heart. But if a godly friend be released by dying, truly we can hardly make ourselves believe that this is a release, or so valuable a release; so much are we under the government of sense, so little doth that faith signify with us, or do its part, that is the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we see not. No! This is to go with us for no release. We look only upon the sensible, that is, upon the gloomy part of such a dispensation, when such a one is gone, released, set at liberty (as a bird out of the cage, or the snare) we can hardly tell how to consider it as a release, we will not be induced to apprehend it so. There are no dispositions, no deportments commonly that suit such an apprehension. And Oh! how unbecoming and incongruous a thing, when Christ is, in that way, about releasing

* The posy on their wedding ring.

such a one, to have a holy soul just upon the confines of a glorious blessed eternity, compassed about with sighs, sobs, tears, and lamentations. How great an incongruity! I have many times thought with myself, the love and kindness of friends and relations is very pleasant in life, but grievous at death. It is indeed, in some respects, a very desirable thing (if God shall vouchsafe it) to die with one's friends about one. It may be one may need some little bodily relief, in those last hours; besides that, some proper thoughts may be suggested by them, to mingle with one's own. And, if God afford the use of reason, and speech, and the supply of his own Spirit, one may possibly, in this last juncture, be a means of some good to them. One may possibly say that that may abide with them, and be of future advantage to them. But in other respects, if the related friendly by-standers cannot duly temper themselves, if they are apter to receive or do more hurt, than good, if christians do not labour to shew a truly Christian spirit, in such a case; their presence has very little eligible in it. And, indeed, the deportment even of those that profess Christianity, about their deceasing godly friends, is such for the most part, as if the foundations of all religion were shaken with them, and as if they had a design to shake them too, if possible, in such with whom they are now to part; as if it were to be called in question, whether what God hath said concerning another world, and the blessed state of the innumerable and holy assembly above be true or no, or were not doubted to be false, and a solemn fiction, invented to delude mortals here on earth.

It is little considered how opposite such a temper of spirit, as commonly appears in us, is to the very design of all Christianity. For doth not the whole of Christianity terminate upon eternity, and upon another state and world? Now do but consider the inconsistencies that are to be found in this case, between the carriage, and temper of many that profess Christianity, and their very profession itself. They acknowledge, they own that the design of Christ's appearing here in this world, and of his dying upon the cross, was to bring us to God, to bring the many sons to glory. They grant that this is not to be done all at once, not all in a day; but it is to be done by degrees. Here he takes up one, and there another; leaving others still to transmit religion, and continue it on to the end of time. So far they agree with our common Lord, and seem to approve the divine determinations, in all these steps of his procedure. But yet for all this, if they might have their own will, Christ should not have one to ascend to him, of those for whom he died, and himself ascended to open heaven for them;

and to prepare a place for their reception, as their Fore-runner, there. I say not one to ascend after him, for they take up with a general approving of this design of his. Very well! say they, it is fitly ordered, his method is wise, and just, and kind, and let him take them that belong to him, when he thinks fit, only let him excuse my family; let him take whom he will, only let him touch no relation of mine, not my husband, wife, child, brother, sister, take whom he will, but let all mine alone. I agree to all he shall do well enough, only let him allow me my exception. But if every one be of this temper and resolution, for themselves and theirs, according to this tendency and course of things, he shall have none at all to ascend; none to bring with him, when he returns. Those that are dead in Jesus, he is to bring with him. No, he should be solitary, and unattended for all them. They, and all their relations would be immortal upon earth. How ill doth this agree, and accord with the Christian scheme and model of things?

But you will say, what! would I persuade you to be indifferent, and not to love, and care for your relatives, or be unwilling to part with them! No. All that I persuade to is, that there be a mixture in your temper, and such a mixture, as that the prevailing ingredient therein may agree with the stronger and weightier reason. It is not that I would have love extinguished among relatives, but I would have it moderated and subdued, to that degree as to admit of being governed by superior, greater, and nobler considerations. Do you think Christ did expect, or design that his disciples should not love him? And yet he tells them. John. 14. 28. If you loved me, you would rejoice that I say I go to my Father. And who in all this world could ever have such a loss, as they of him, dwelling in flesh among them? Yet, says he, if you loved me, you would rejoice that I say I go to my Father. And when the apostle, visibly tending towards death, by the prediction given concerning him, (Acts. 21. 13.) said to the disciples round about him: What mean you to weep, and to break my heart? I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the name of Jesus; if there had not been a faulty excess in the affection they expressed, certainly he would not have rebuked it, he would not have blamed what he thought not blame-worthy.

In short, it were desirable (if God see good) to die amidst the pleasant friends and relatives, who were not ill-pleased that we lived; that living, and dying, breath might mingle, and ascend together in prayers, and praises to the blessed Lord of heaven and earth, the God of our lives; if then we could part with consent, a rational, and a joyful consent.

Otherwise, to die with ceremony, to die amongst the fashionable bemoanings, and lamentations, as if we despaired of futurity! One would say (with humble submission to the divine pleasure) Lord! Let me rather die alone! in perfect solitude! in some unfrequented wood, or on the top of some far remote mountain! where none might interrupt the solemn transactions between thy glorious blessed self, and my joyfully departing, self-resigning soul!

But in all this we must refer ourselves to God's holy pleasure, who will dispose of us, living, and dying, in the best, the wisest, and the kindest way.