



SERMON VIII.*

And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him, &c.—John xx. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

HERE is *first* a conference betwixt Mary Magdalene and the angels who had watched Christ's grave, and been witness of His resurrection (verse 13). Then she turneth from them, and lights upon Christ, and knows Him not.

Second. A conference betwixt Mary and Christ, while she knew not that it was He (verse 14, 15). A person may believe in Christ, and yet not have the assurance thereof. They may have true faith in Him, and yet not the sensible assurance of His love.

Third. A conference betwixt Christ and her, after knowing Him, all full of comfort. The Lord alloweth† comfort to His people after a time of mourning. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm xxx. 5).

Mary Magdalene comes first to the grave, and meets with Christ: for He had dispossessed her of seven devils, and she loved much, because many sins were forgiven her. We are ready to count sin and Satan a sweet possession as long as we have them;

* Preached in the evening at Anwoth Communion, 1634.

† Gives an allowance of.

but when Christ taketh these from us, we loathe them, and rejoice in Him and His mercy.

“*Why weepst thou?*”—There is no envying of the angels at her desire after Christ. They are glad that sinners are sick of love for their well beloved. Mary had cause to rejoice, and not to weep: for Christ’s rising should be as a napkin to wipe all tears from sinners’ faces.*

Doctrine. We have foolish and vain affections, poisoned with sin: we weep when we should laugh, and laugh when we should weep. The disciples should have rejoiced, because He said, “I go to the Father.” It was a blessed way for them. He was going to prepare a lodging-house for them; but they were afraid, and had sorrow of heart for His way-going. Some think He feeds not His people in His absence: nay, but let me say it, God indeed not only feeds His own people with sense of presence, but also with absence. When the moon is under a cloud, and the Lord is away, the desire groweth, and the hunger and thirst after Him increaseth, which is a good evidence. We often mistake our Lord, and are really going forward, when we apprehend we are going backward.

“*Why weepst thou?*”—The angels could teach this, That Christ’s rising from the dead is matter of joy. Christ seeing John falling down before Him for fear (Rev. i. 17, 18), laid His right hand upon him, saying, “Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.” (Psalm cxviii. 24), “This is the day which the Lord hath made; we

* He has a sermon on Rev. xxi. 4, which has the title, “*Christ’s Napkin.*”

will rejoice and be glad in it." (Acts xiii. 32, 33), "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us, their children in that He hath raised up Jesus again." Therefore, Christ, after His resurrection, said unto His disciples, "Peace be unto you. It is I, be not afraid." All is well; seeing "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). Just as if Christ should say, You and I have won the action; be glad and come out, all is paid. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Wo* and cold would our comfort have been for ever, if death had arrested Christ in the grave. It is an uncouth† cold bed to go into death's dark pit never to come out again: they are all lodged there for ever. It is a miserable house; the inner chamber is the king of terrors: yea, black hell, hell and the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. But the Lord, in His resurrection, hath triumphed over death and hell, and delivered all His elect people from this grievous curse that they were lying under, in being heirs of hell. Therefore our Lord's coming out of prison is a relieving all His children. Think now (if we may make the supposition) ye see a poor man with one or two bairns on his back, wading a deep water; he is like to drown, and the bairns crying for fear, and he cries to them, Hold your tongue, my bairns, and I shall warrant you; and then when he comes out, he wipes all their faces. So Christ in the grave had all the children that His Father gave Him legally hanging about His neck, and in His arms. Our heaven, and all our writs and charters, all our salvation, was in the grave with Him.

* Miserable. † Strange.

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“*Mary answered, They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.*”—Have I not good cause to weep? May I not be permitted to weep my fill? They have carried away my Christ from me. We see then two things in her. They have taken away my Christ. He is dead, and they have borne Him to another place, and I wot not where he is: but yet howbeit He be away, He is *my Lord*. The *Note* then is this:

Dead Christ, as ye think; a hidden, and a frowning Christ may be *thy Christ*, and *my Christ*. (Isaiah xlix. 14) “But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.” Then a forsaking God may be Zion’s God. When faith and fainting are wrestling a fall together, faith keeps a hank\* of Christ in its own hand. Faith can say, Christ is not dead, albeit there be a hundred miles betwixt Him and me; yet He is my Christ, “my Lord, and my God.” The child of God may be driven from many holds, and from the faith of his rising again from the dead, and from the faith of many sweet promises, and, fainting and doubting, may slander Christ, and say, He is unkind and away: but there is aye an hold to the fore,† and faith says, “He is my God.” Like a captain besieged when there are many walls battered down to him, and the enemy has taken in mickle ground about him, and taken all the outer works, yet there is aye one castle untaken and to the fore that cannot be taken.

They say, The hold that a dying man gets of a thing, he keeps it till death. The dead-hold that a child of God gets of Christ it keeps for ever. It is good if we can stick to Christ any way, either dead

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* A tie of connection. † A fortress still in existence.

Christ or living Christ, whether kend Christ or un-kend Christ, we must still keep something, or we lose all. Let us keep a hold of the hand that strikes us, and kiss it, if we cannot get His face and neck to kiss.

We count little of Christ when we have our fill of Him, and when He is living, but stay until hunger come, and then ye would give a world for His dead body. There is such a hunger in Mary Magdalene that she would be glad even to have dead Christ in her arms! She thinks it is better than nothing! Mary seeks no better than to have her arms full of dead Christ.

Sometimes we let good meat spill, and count little of it! We think little of His company at Communion: there is a day coming, wherein ye shall be blyth* of a small crumb of Christ's bread. Were ye hungry, as may be ye will when this board is drawn: ye shall be blyth of a touch of the hem of His garment and a kiss of His feet. Little ken ye what it is to want. (Lam. i. 16), "For these things I weep: mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me." I trow that was no bairn's play. (Psalm lxxvii. 3), "I remembered God, and was troubled," how in former times He embraced me, and loved me; but now He has left me, and I know not what to do. "I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed." What is that? "I remembered God, and was troubled." Should it not rather have been, I remembered God, and leaped for joy? Nay, I remembered God, He that once remembered me, and loved me, but now He has left me, and I know not what to do! At such a time a blink of God, howbeit it were as short as a

* Glad to get.

flash of fire in the air, it were half a heaven. It were good we were all at Mary's part of it, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

She says, "*I know not where they have laid Him.*"—A sore matter to lose Christ: but a sorer matter not to know where to find Him. It is a trial both to want Christ, and not to know where to find Him. Says the spouse, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth? If ye find Him, tell Him I am sick of love." Sometimes it will be that the children of God will seek Him in many wynds,* and not find Him in prayer, in the word, nor at the holy table, nor in reading, nor in conference. They will, as it were, follow Christ from place to place, and not know where to find Him; they know not where He is.

"*I know not where they have laid Him.*"—She believed that Christ was yet dead, and this was her ignorance and infidelity; for He had often told them that He would rise again, but they believed Him not. Then we see that there is ignorance even with a good and hearty affection to Christ, in God's children. In Cant. v. 5, there we see a church both sleeping and wrestling at once. Nicodemus loved Christ's company, yet there was great ignorance in him. The Lord's disciples followed Him, and yet they were fools and slow of heart to believe the Scriptures (Luke xxiv. 25). Our soul is like a harp, wherein there is a broken or mistuned string; our mind and our affections are like a broken or lame leg. We have some light in the mind, but our affections are cold like lead. And when the affections are blown upon by the wind of the Spirit, the mind and memory both may have the

* Out of the way streets.

truant sickness; nay, if God yoke them not all, and drive them up the furrows, some piece or other will lie back like a lazy ox. There is aye a crook or halt in us, so that we go crooked to heaven, as Jacob did. But a sound, hearty affection, even an ounce of it, is worth a stone weight of dim light. Alas! This age hath light, but it is barrell'd up. We start all up to be professors! but few have the furniture for heaven. God forbid, that I should discourage any, but I see men contenting themselves with too little; some light, and weak love, to the word, and the preacher, and still their old sins and old jog-trot^o is kept; and as dead in practice and reformation of life as they were ten years ago, and some of them worse. Now in the name and authority of the Son of God, try that it be good sufficient work; see that it be stamped and sealed with Christ's arms.

“*She turned herself about.*”—I see the angels cannot help a wounded conscience that has lost a hold of Christ (Cant. iii. 1, 2, 3). The watchmen could not lead the church to Christ, unto Him whom her soul loved. Nay, in prayer sometimes He cannot be gotten, (Psalm xxii. 2), “O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not: and in the night season, and am not silent.” What meant the prophet's dry throat, and yet could not get God? Job says, chap. xiii. 24, God hideth His face. In the Word there is often such deadness that the child of God cannot win to his feet: and they may wonder who have seen and had the experience of defection. Will ye not say, When God lays His finger on the soul, and breaks a string of the conscience, what means will be used to get a knot on this broken string, and to get the broken bone knit

• Slow and slovenly pace.

again? I grant you God (in prayer) has been found, but I am speaking of a presence, or of an access to a blink of Christ; I have experience to say with me, and I knew it of late. Wot ye that presence and comfort is sweet meat, and not for Christ's bairns' ordinary food? There is a time or tide when the wind bloweth where it listeth, even after the use of means. Christ will come, and there is but deadness in the meantime, when ye can neither feel, see, nor hear Christ. Then ye may say, What shall we do, if means prevail not?

Answer. I know no child of God, who is ever in such a case, as they can neither hear, see, nor feel. The sleeping Church has a waking heart (Cant. v. 1). Grace to miss Christ is some feeling, hearing, and seeing. Those who are in Saul's case (1 Sam. xxviii. 15), who said, "I am sore distressed, the Lord is departed from me," are in a sad taking: but the children of God may blame themselves, who are in the exercise of conscience seeking comfort and do not find it. I say I forbid not but that they pray, hear, read; yea, use all means for it; but I would have them doing two things.

1. That ye would continue to cry, look heaven's height, and be very impatient till you get your rights and a new stamp. Sleep not, eat not, rest not, until He come again. Complain, fret, make haste, long, and hunger, for Christ. Look up as if ye were angry at the clouds that hide Him and hinder you to see Him. Shall one bid men fall asleep who have lost Christ?

2. Yet be very patient and submissive, binding Him to no time or manner of coming. (Psalm xl. 1), "I waited patiently on the Lord, and He inclined His ear, and heard my cry." Then David both cried, and shouted, and yet had patience. Is a shouting and crying man a patient man? I say he is, 2 Peter. iii. 12.


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Wait on and hasten to the day of the Son of God. See if I lie.

“*And saw Jesus and knew Him not.*”—As in the body seeing and hearing went out, so in the soul we may see Christ, and not know Him. Many have light, as sick men have meat at their bedside, but cannot use it. But here is the matter; at every new meeting we misken\* Christ. While your soul is sick, and while He kens not you, the acquaintance is aye to make over again. He must blow the coal; Christ’s hot head must warm our cold ones, and His living hand must hold our dead hands and quicken them, and then we begin to stir our fingers, and to take hold of Him. But if Christ be but three days away, we are to begin at A B C again. He left Peter but a while of a day or night, and Peter forsook Him, and never repented till the Lord looked a loving look to him that awakened him. He turned a little from His disciples and they forsook Him and fled, and never wan to their feet again till He reproved them for their infidelity and opened their hearts. He knows a weak sheep fallen into a pit or hole that cannot win out itself. Christ aye looseth the fankled† lamb, bleating and bleeding in the thorny bush. A bow cannot bend itself, a man’s arm must do it; it cannot shoot itself, a hand must put the arrow on the string, and draw and loose it. So ye must learn the gate‡ to heaven. It is a borrowing life we have here! We are aye falling, and Christ is aye setting us to our feet again! I see Christ must be cumbered in leading us the right gate to heaven. I think I have mind of an old crazy barque, each dash it gets on a rock it falls out in a hole, and new timber must be put in; and the

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* Mistake; misapprehend. † Tied up. ‡ The way.

next day it gets another dash, and a whole board falls out, and a new board must be put in again. This is like our conscience, this crazy soul of ours, having rotten timber in it. A dash of desertion for three days makes a crack in Mary Magdalene's soul, that she sees Christ, and sees Him not! David dashed against a rock of lust, and falls out in a wide rent of adultery and murder. Peter's old barque gets a knock of fear, and he falls out in denial of his Lord. The Lord's fore-hammer lighted upon the disciples, and they fall out with a love of honour and ease here; and they fall out in a great rent, and think He shall make them great men in the world, and restore again the kingdom to Israel. I tell you Christ must aye be putting in new timber till all be made new work, for Christ will take old Adam's rotten timber out of us, and nickle work it is to make this old crazy conscience new, that is like to fall to flinders.*

Jesus saith to her, Woman, why weepest thou?—What needs Christ question thus? Why should Christ ask at a broken-hearted woman, seeking none but Christ, Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? Ye know a father will be minded to give an apple to his bairn, and he will say, holding it out, Will ye have that? Ye know He said to a poor man, "Wilt thou be made whole?" There may be some souls longing for Him this day, and yet He say, My dear people, tell Me whom ye would have, and whom seek ye? See here, there was a fault in her desire; she sought a dead Christ, or His dead body, and He would have her to seek a living Christ. And therefore, look, when ye are seeking Christ, that there be not a fault in your desire; ye are perhaps serving yourselves when ye are

* Pieces; shivers.

seeking Him. Ye are all seeking comfort, and He perhaps brought you here to hear nothing but conviction, and to humble your proud hearts. When we are seeking God, and our affections opened, the devil can shute^o in his arm to the shoulder blades, and cast in a handful of his draff[†] and spoil the mask.‡ Who would think that a woman weeping for Christ was wrong? and yet she knows not whom she seeketh? Yea, at Communion, let me ask, for Christ's sake, whom ye are seeking? Ye will say, Christ. I say, Would to God it were so. I will have nothing, says one, but comfort. I will have nothing, says another, but a soft heart. - And a third comes because it is the fashion! I will ask at these souls, Whom seekest thou? Painted hypocrite; plastered, rotten, dissembler, thou art seeking the devil and condemnation to thyself.

"She supposing Him to be the Gardener."—Her mind was confounded with sorrow and infidelity in her heart, and the Lord held her eyes that she kend not Christ to be Christ; and yet Christ looked more heavenly-like than He wont to do.

Doctrine. Then a child of God may be speaking to Him, and not ken Him. Alas! we often measure Him by our own foot! So Job takes the Lord to be a changed Lord, another God to him, and one that was turned to be his enemy! And so did Jonah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Habakkuk, &c., in their wrestlings. For infidelity is a thick mask upon men's eyes; and who are they whom Satan will not blindfold? He would have put a mask upon Christ's eyes, and put all the world's glory betwixt Him and His Father! but Christ saw through the mask. And Satan would have

• Thrust in. † Refuse dregs. ‡ The infusion; the brewing.

laid court, honour, and pleasures of sin before Moses' eyes, but God rent the mask, and he looked to the recompense of reward. The devil laid gold over Balaam's eyes. Has not that trumpet of Rome made Christ the gardener? There is no Christ in question or request now but that which rides in Parliament! They have put silks * on Christ and His Kirk, and they will not wear them. I pray you cast off the devil's hoods and his masks, and seek from Christ the salve, to see Christ to be Christ.

"*Tell me where thou hast laid Him.*"—What a lift would this corpse have been? Would not dead Christ, His grave clothes, and an hundred pound weight of myrrh and aloes, that was laid upon His body, have been a heavy lift to a woman? Six stone weight or more? Yet Mary says she would bear Him hence, nay, though she could not, she would take† a lift of Him till her back cracked, and her arm guard had been out of lith,‡ but she would have had Him.

Doctrine. Love has strong broad shoulders: the high mountains and the heavy burdens will not tire love. Love will never sweat, faint, nor fall in a swoon, for God helpeth love. Love is as strong as death, or the grave (Cant. viii. 6). Get love, and no burden Christ will lay on you will be heavy. Were not the martyrs fraughted§ with love when heavy death and burning quick did not weight them when it was laid on them? But love made them run up the mountains with death and tortures on their back! Lay all hell upon a soul that has love to Christ, he will run with the burden. Seek and get love, and it

* And these are things which Christ and His Church reject.

† Try to lift Him.

‡ Joint.

§ Freighted.

will make you bear sufferings: for love will not burst at the broad side. Came not Moses from the court, with his back laden with affection to the people of God, and tired not?

“*Jesus saith unto her, Mary.*”—See Christ calleth upon Mary by her name. Thus it is no dry general acquaintance that Christ has with His own. As ye use to say, It is hard to know such a man, but I have seen him. Nay, but Christ knows all His sheep by the head. (Luke xix. 5), “Jesus looked up, and said, Come down, Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thine house.” (See John i. 48), “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.” (John x. 14), “I am the good Shepherd, I know My sheep.” This behoved to be Christ, He is not such a rash merchant, but He saw His wares, and kend them all by their names ere He laid down a price for them. Nay, God brought them all before Him, and said, By their dwellings and names take them; and I will give the ends of the earth for Thy inheritance. He shall get all beyond the river (Zeph. iii. 10), the dispersed of Judah, &c. (Isaiah vi. 10). All these are His. The Father hath said, Son, Ye shall not work for nothing. What think Ye of your wares? how please your goods and mine? And His Father gave Him a fair roll of all their names, by the head, man and woman, as particularly as He had named them, John, Thomas, Mary, &c. And the whole flock was marked. As when a man out of a great flock selleth so many sheep, and sets them by for the merchant; he lets him see his wares, and he puts his mark upon them. So the world, even all mankind, was a great flock before God, and the Father gave Christ the

pick* of the market. And He chose so many out of the flock, and bargained with Him for them. And the Father told† them all over to the Son, a fair number of bairns, saying, Take them, Son; but ye shall pay dear for them. And they were all of God's mark and Christ's mark together; and Christ kens what fields they go in; and He has them booked, and calls them, and puts the Mediator's name on them—the new name, even His mark. So here is the reason why, of two or three thousand in one kirk together where the word is preached, Christ calls out one man by name, and the ither by name. I trow it is because here is Christ's bought wares, He is up in the count. The Father must keep condition with Christ, for He got arles‡ (as you say) in Abel's days, and He must keep remembrance of all His sheep. But ye will say, Alas! Christ has forgotten me. Well, beware of that. Will ye say the Father has miscounted a sheep, and Christ has lost a sheep in the telling? Then He is sleepy and careless. But it is not so. This is a sweet thing that He cares for you; thou art up in my books, John, Mary, &c. Ye are up in the white roll, and on that condition I give to you myself, my flesh and my blood, this day. O then be blythe§ man, thou wilt not fall || by in the telling. There is no miscount between the Father and the Son, but faithful and sicker.¶ I pray you tell me when heard you Christ name you by name? I tell you when you think each promise is spoken to you by name, and when you say, Yon is spoken firm. And as when a roll is calling, each one cries here, "Here," to his own name.

* The choicest of.

† Counted.

‡ An earnest; pledge of what was to come. § Glad; cheery.

|| Be overlooked.

¶ Firm; secure.

Then when the gospel is preaching, Christ is a calling the roll, your soul, with joy beliveth when ye cry, Here, here, Lord Jesus. Therefore take good tent when ye hear your own names called, and answer them.

“*She saith unto Him, Rabboni.*”—Thereby acknowledging herself Christ’s scholar, and Christ to be her master.

Observe. Here is but a short preaching that Christ makes. He says but one word, Mary: but it is more than a word; and Mary presently knows. So soon as ever Christ speaks, the kirk saith, “It is the voice of my beloved!” A wife who has wanted her husband seven years, when He returns she hears his tongue in the closs, and shouts and cries, Its my dear husband’s tongue, and comes out to meet him. “It is I, be not afraid” (Matt. xiv. 27). And they kend His tongue, and presently received Him into the ship. Christ may learn us all to preach; for one of His preachings is worth a horse-load of our preachings; He has the tongue of the learned indeed. With His mouth He can blow up iron doors. Well kens He all the back-springes* and double locks of the soul, and how Satan has need-nailed† the door. Christ has the way of it, and can draw the bolt with His voice. So then when Christ cometh and speaketh, He brings His word with Him. When the devil comes he has a dumb knock; he raps but will not speak. He cannot bring the word with him, or it is a hollow earthly voice and harsh, aye crying, Clay, clay! court, honour, the world, your lusts, your fill! This is not like Christ’s tongue. An image speaks not; the dumb ceremonies have not a tongue; they speak not to the soul; they have a dead knock. I shall be an-

* A springe is a gin, or snare made of wire. † Strongly nailed.

swerable when they come you shall break your heart and say, Yon is not Christ's tongue.

"*Rabboni.*"—Mary had been seeking a dead Christ, and thought He had not been risen; and she gets a living Christ. *Doctrine.* No man ever went to seek Christ in a right way, but he got more than he sought! The woman of Canaan sought a crumb under the board with the dogs; but ere Christ and she parted, I trow He set her at the boardhead above all Israel.

The forlorn* son came home, and he would be nothing but a servant; he craved but to stand at the by-board. He speaks but of dry-bread; he spake not of whole clothes; but his Father put on him the best robe, and a ring on his finger, and killed the fatted calf, and set him at the high board, and at the first mess. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. iii. 20).

Now ye hear us speak of Christ; ye come to seek Him; ye think there is much in Him. Come and see, and taste, and ye shall feel that there is a hundred thousand degrees more! See then that you make an errand to Christ, for a sick bairn, for a weak body, for a troubled friend; and ye shall get more than ye seek! Ken ye not that poor folks are glad to get an errand to a hall-house?† If they can make an errand they ken they will find plenty there! Christ is a hall-house: go to Him.

"*Jesus sayeth unto her, Touch Me not.*"—Matthew says, the women held Him by the feet; and no question Mary was hanging about His neck to kiss Him, and would have thrust Him into her heart. But Christ says, "Touch Me not." Alas! (might she

* Lost prodigal.

† The mansion of a rich man.

think) what means this? Ye may wonder what ails Him at the poor woman! Trow ye Christ was grown lordlier? Was He more lordly than He was, because He was risen and glorified in part? Or, will lordships change manners with Him? No. Its true He forbids her; it was a fault in her seeking to touch Him; she doated too much on His bodily presence; and thought He had come up again to live on the earth, and to eat and drink with publicans and sinners as He was wont to do. But He will not feed her foolish love; Christ would have wise love. Ye are aye craving sense, joy, comfort. Look if that be wise love of yours, and that ye serve not always your pleasure, and delight in Christ, but not for Christ Himself. I say, seek yourself in Christ and your joy; but not for yourself. I pray you mark this; we are beguiled often in our seeking of Christ, for Christ here would be at another thing.

“Touch me not, I am not yet ascended,” &c.—It is as much as to say, When I go to heaven and send down the Holy Ghost upon thee, thou shalt then touch Me by faith thy fill: but now hold thy hand, hold thee by that thou hast. When, I say, Christ, for causes known to Himself, will give you no aumus,* nill ye, will ye, then ye should not be in a marvel that ye do not see Christ! Rent not your bills† until I tell you Christ will cry to His beggars, Ye will not be served at this time.

Take an Answer. Now, I come to answer experience here. Will ye not pray, and come from God as it were with empty wind and nothing?

Answer. Christ said, “Touch Me not:” ye were perhaps seeking to play yourself like a bairn with

* Alms. † Tear not in pieces your petition.

Christ ; and He will let you know He is Christ. He is not a Christ to play bairns with. So after we would have joy and comfort in Christ for our pleasure, is often as bairns that would have a painted hat to play with. Ye think, so soon as ye knock and pray, no more should be, but that all heaven's gates should be opened or casten up, and that the King will come out and meet you immediately, and take you into the house of wine. Nay, but stay : what haste? stay, at leisure, and ask at your souls what ye are seeking when ye seek sense and joy. If ye be not out of yourselves, and seek it not for this end, that ye may be hearted* to pray, and hearted to go up the mountain to heaven, I say, Beware ye find not a closed door : and howbeit this were not, beware. "Touch Me not," is good and sweet meet for you. Stand and knock, and go away, and come again and knock ; and that draws out faith in a long and strong thread. And that is as good for you as if Christ and you had met at first. For know ye that access, feeling, and liberty, are graces? And He will give them but when He pleases : and it is best that Christ make delicates of such good cheer.

But what is the best mark then in seeking of Christ?

Answer. Take Christ anyway : if He be here, it is He ; if there, it is He. Be as content with Him with tears and down-casting as in tears and joy. Nay, here is a second mark—If you can take Him out of hell smoking in your arms. But to seek comfort in Christ is not to seek Christ, say ye? I answer, If ye seek Christ for comfort, and not comfort for Christ, and joy. If ye ask how these are differenced? I answer, Even as the spouse loves the bridegroom, not for his fair

* Encouraged

clothes, and gold rings and bracelets, but for himself. So must ye seek Christ for Himself, and not Christ for comfort. For, I say, Joy and comfort is but the bridegroom's jewels; but the bridegroom himself is better. Nay, a convicting and rebuking Christ is no less true than a loving Christ! Then I say, It is not Christ, but His love ye would be at.

"Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father."—Christ brings His word with a reason; when I am ascended into heaven, then ye shall get touching Me your fill, wait on till that time. So this is no absolute nay-say, but a delay.

Doctrine. There is never one of Christ's refusals, but they are mixed with hope; the seed of faith and hope is in them. So He said to the woman of Canaan, let the children be first served. There is no refusal, but He puts her in hopes that when the Jews had gotten their dinner, then the poor woman should get the broken meat. Paul, when buffeted, prayed. Christ returned the answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee." This was a good answer. When the disciples would fain have had Christ abiding with them, He said, Nay, but this nay had with it, "But I will come and receive you to Myself." Then take not Christ's nay-say at the worst; it is both sweet and comfortable, and His strokes there is aye that in them, "Ye shall get." Then Christ's refusals are comfortable, and His strokes sweet and healthful. If we have honest hearts in seeking, one way or another God shall comfort us.

Being now risen from the dead, He says, "*Go, tell My brethren.*" He would comfort His brethren with this comfortable doctrine, letting them see this glory He was to be advanced to; it took not away that communion of nature that was between Him and them: therefore He is not ashamed to call them brethren. (Heb. ii. 11)

We have one God, they and I are halfers together. And more than that, we are Father's bairns. God is their Father and my Father. So we have one mother; for Christ was born of the kirk. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals" (Cant. iii. 11).

This is Jesus, the King of Peace, named by His mother the Kirk. But He was crowned with a crown of thorns; and also, crowned by the faithful who made Him their King. Then Christ and we are more than half brethren, we are full brethren; for God will have no step-bairns. We are native and of kin to Him; all the water in the sea will not wash Christ's blood and ours asunder, for Christ and we behoved to be more than second or third a-kin. For the law's cause, we behoved to be as sib* as brethren: and therefore, in (Cant. iv. 5) He calls the Kirk His Sister, and delights to avow His kindred to her, for Christ will not man-swear† the silliest of His kindred. Now by the law, the poor brother that had mortgaged his land, had power among the Jews to make an assignation of his right to his brother, or the nearest of his kindred: and so might put his brother in the right of it. As an oppressed man, who is bereft of his inheritance, and has not moyen nor means to double out his matter by law, he makes an assignation of his right to his nearest friend or chief, who has means and moyen to win the action; and that friend has it also in his power to put the poor oppressed man in his place again. So here: no one but God who is above law, having given to Christ a body, made Christ an assignation to our bloody bond, which the law

* Nearly related.

† Perjure; break His oath to.

and the justice of God had against us. And when we had forfeit paradise, and could not double out our cause, the kind kinsman, Christ-man, was very kindly to pardon and come in our room as assignee to His poor ruined brethren. And God put into the assignation whereto Christ's name was borrowed, three things.

First, Our flesh and infirmities as sinless. Secondly, All our sins, and whatever followed them. So Christ got with us mickle black debt and many cumbers. And the cursed bond of the law was removed, and Christ was written in the bond accursed, and hanged on a tree. And thirdly, Christ was assigned to our heaven, and He named it to Him, by us.

Then Christ got the law, and we the gospel; and the assignation was mutual. And this was sweet, for Christ made us assignees to His bond, and He was assignee to our flesh. He made the work so as we should be assignees to His Spirit and His grace, that out of His fulness we should receive grace for grace. And so by law, Christ's grace is ours, and He puts us in His own place, and makes us assignees to His glory. (Luke xxi. 25), "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me."

Then believers be blythe. You are Christ's executors and assignees.* Now that Christ's testament is confirmed, intromet with † His goods, the law will warrant you so to do.

But there is a third thing in Christ's assignation, which He will not take well with if ye refuse it. He makes His brethren assignees to His cross. Ye will start at this, but it is your glory! In the world ye shall have tribulation, or affliction. When ye have

* Persons to whom possession of property is destined. † Use.

subscribed the assignation, the said binds and obliges me to suffer for Him. Even for every cuff Christ took for you and me (and He got many a blue stroke for us), ye must be ready to take a cuff for Him. And know ye there was a clause in the end of the assignation full of comfort; Christ gives you a back-bond* that the cross will not slay you. Christ says, Brethren, I bind and oblige myself I will not leave you fatherless, I have overcome the world, I will see you again.

See then how ye are matched. And say not; Indeed it sets us not to be handled this way. But learn ye to be like your brother, meek and lowly, and then ye may ken ye are brethren. Professors be like Him; ye are come off for Christ's cause. Live holily, for fear Christ man-sweat† you; and in judgment say, Ye are none of His kindred, "Depart from Me, I know you not." So, look; as your brother was but like a strange man in the world, so must ye be. Christ will deny step-bairns, and illegitimate bastard brethren that are not born again.

"*I ascend to My Father.*"—He sends His disciples word or‡ ever He sees them, He must up to heaven for them. And therefore, He forbids them to dream of a Christ ever bodily present with them on the earth. And therefore they that would have Christ must follow His trodden path, and trace Him all the gate§ to heaven, and they shall find Him there. Ask Him out in heaven, at the right hand of the Father. And therefore believe His death and resurrection, and so stand there, and go no further, nor slip from Christ like a knotless thread, and lose His footsteps. But we must go after Him to heaven, for where our

* A bond declaring the person free. † Break His oath to you.
‡ Before. § Way

treasure is, there will our heart be also (Matt. vi. 21). If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father. For except we sunder* with Christ, we must be where He is, and He is now up in heaven. He is now up in glory, and we are all down in a low valley; for sinners are aye playing at the mouth of the black pit, like daft bairns playing at the brink of a deep river. And Christ is crying, Come up, come up, after Me, lend Me your hand, I will draw you up. O! should He cry, Up with Me; and we are aye falling down upon the clay of this earth. He would have us flying to heaven: and we are still creeping upon this earth. What will become of the worms, and gathering worldlings?

A man that must ride forty miles ere night, and ye see him drinking at an inn at four o'clock afternoon, thirty-nine miles from his journey's end; ye may think he purposes not to be there that night. Is it not afternoon with our life? many be here past their twelve hours! And who knows how soon it may fall on night? and many have not gone one mile to heaven! Believe me, many men live as if they had the keys of heaven at their belt; and think to stick in this clay of the earth all their days, and leap to heaven at their death, at one leap! Believe me, ye never did leap such a leap in your life time; if ye would be there, its high time ye were on horseback already, and in Christ's chariot driving and posting to heaven as fast as ye can or may. Have ye not furnishing in heaven before you? Christ is there, is not your flitting before you? Then up, ye must after Him. Home, home, flee for your life, this town ye dwell in, and all about it, will be

* Separate from.

burnt with fire (2 Peter iii. 10). Flee then, else ye will be burnt if ye stay here.

See the good word the apostle has (Phil. iii. 20), "Our conversation is in heaven:" our burgess-haunting* is in heaven. And when ye would seek a man, you must seek him where he haunts and usually resorts to. As if ye seek the drunkard, he haunts amongst the barrels! for he is but a living barrel himself, to fill and empty, and to glut up his belly again with a new browst!† Would ye know the fleshly man's dwelling, where haunts he? In the whore's chamber; sits he not down at the mouth of hell? (as says Solomon) is he not well neighboured? The devil and her are door neighbours, upon the march together. Would ye see where the earthly man haunts, what need you ask? You shall get the worm in the earth among clay. Ask where the child of God haunts? where haunts he? Up in heaven; the Saviour and He cannot be sundry.‡ He is climbing on His hands and feet to be up. He is ascending and desiring to be with Christ.

Oh! the devil leads many down stairs; and when all is done, men get not their prey on the earth. I think I see them fishing for baronies, and thousands setting their lines and making all their might for a draught of fish, and to make up a fair estate to them, or theirs. And then I may see the tide, and the storm breaking the lines and taking them away, and they come home with empty creels like traiked§ slippery fishers, both wo|| and slippery, crying, shame, ruined; we have got nothing, but have lost twenty pounds worth of nets. So are men undoing their

* *Haunt* is to frequent a place or company.

‡ Separated.

§ Worn out.

† A brewing.

|| Sad.

souls through the storm to seek fishing, and they lose their conscience, and a tide of temptation takes their conscience from them, and they go home to their grave with nothing. And some of them are forced to cry, The soul is lost.

My beloved, in the bowels of Christ, who has given His flesh and His blood, and offered it to you this day, in the Sacrament of His Supper, let us lift our thoughts from off this vain world, and transitory things below; and let us set our heart and affections on things heavenly and divine, trusting in the Lord through the whole of our wilderness journey, and inquiring for Him all the way to the very ports and gates of heaven.

We must not attend ordinances for the fashion, and according to use and wont (as we say), but for His glory, and our own soul's salvation. Nothing is to be done here, but upon the footing of divine authority. Away, therefore, with all Romish trash, will-worship, and superstition, in the service of God! All the trumpery of the Romish harlot ought to have no place in the House of God. But not insisting.*

Live soberly, righteously, and godly in your day and generation. In the midst of trials and difficulties, trust in the Lord, and put your confidence in Him; and there is no fear of an outgate, in the Lord's due time and way. Remember, He saith, I ascend to My Father, and your Father; to My God, and your God: Follow ye Me. Amen.

* I do not go farther.